

Of Butterflies and Bigots

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Janice B. Anderson, who is so deeply appreciated by our children for being such a devoted mother.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many people, but want to especially thank my ever-faithful editor Dr Andrew Potts.

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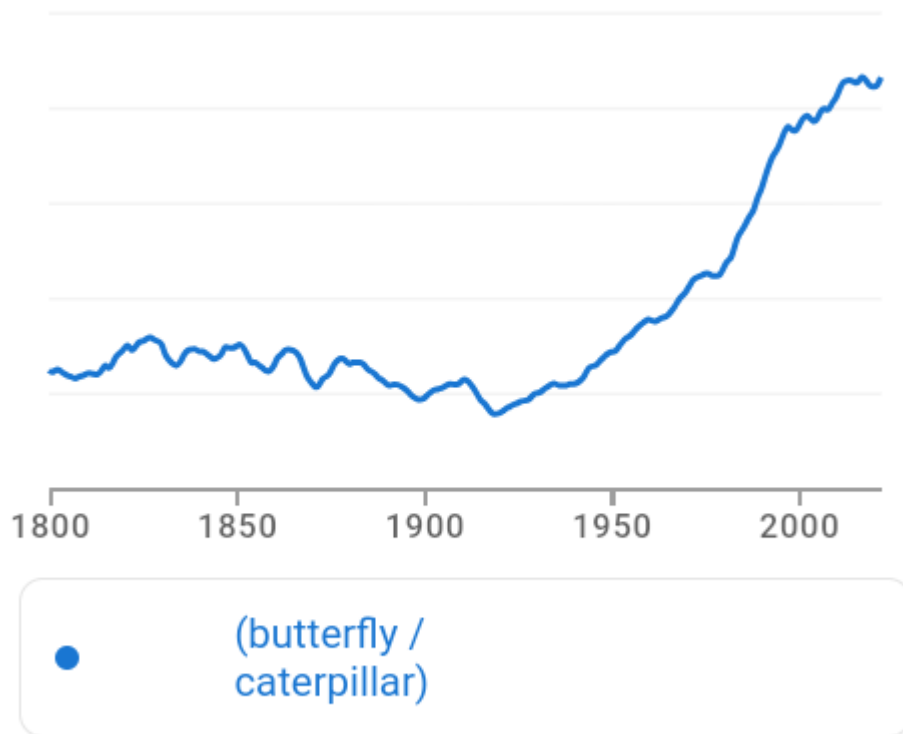
Of Personages and Professionals

“I find among the poems of Schiller no mention of the caterpillar.”¹ So wrote the poet Ogden Nash. This insect larva is not the only creature to have been disregarded. The same can be said for children. Bigots, as we will see, create bigots who go on to disregard their own children, creating even more bigots. We have a vicious circle. It takes complete nurturing to see the small. Schiller did write, “Slowly the butterfly floats, poised on ambiguous wing.”² If the insect is regarded, it is over the adult stage. We would need to put our professional pride in our pocket, but perhaps our very, very distantly related cousin, the “the repulsive and sinister form of the caterpillar”³ as the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche described it or that Child in the manger can bring us to our senses. If we can set aside our biases there is deep wisdom to be found in the evolutionary strategy of the caterpillar and in the divine strategy of the Incarnation, as we will see.

A friend of mine is into the conservation of brown hyenas. While conversing with a neighbour he casually mentioned his passion. Her response was outrage. How could he support such vile creatures? “Did you not see *The Lion King*?” she blurted out. I kid you not! It may seem incredible that a grown adult could be so silly as to confuse the animated, fictional hyena with the real animal, but there you go. It would be very troubling if the early stages of wonderful creatures that are the closest to us were disregarded so that our views of them were largely fictional, yet we will see that this is indeed the case, with unhappy consequences for them. The creatures I am talking about are those little personages we call children. Dr. Seuss said, “A person's a person no matter how small,” yet certain very adult professionals become so single-dimensional in their professions that they cannot see this. It is very possible that you glossed over my use of “grown adult” earlier. The common presumption is that adults perceive the world better than children and they do, but only in some ways. In other ways children perceive the world better. This is what recent research has revealed, as we will see.

Perhaps it is easier to see how single-dimensional thinking can lead us astray over those much simpler creatures called caterpillars. It is a curious thing. Only thirty percent of the life span of Lepidoptera is taken up by the adult stage and caterpillars grow into either butterflies or moths. Yet, in a Google search, the term ‘butterfly’ gets five *times* the number of hits as ‘caterpillar’ does⁴. Furthermore, in Google's Ngram Viewer's index of English books ‘butterfly’ comes up four *times* as frequently as ‘caterpillar’ in 2020 and has been steadily increasing since the early 1900's (see accompanying image). Why is this? Amongst other things, it might have something to do with both butterflies and authors being adults. Caterpillars are neither seen nor heard much. Evidently, adults do not necessarily see the world as it is. “There is more to seeing than meets the eyeball,”⁵ as the philosopher of science, Norwood Russell Hanson famously put it. This is particularly true concerning creatures that are not

beautiful and not great, but small. Perhaps there are other things about caterpillars that we are missing?



Little children are about as unprofessional as caterpillars, and with their relative ignorance and active imagination, it may be thought that they are easier to trick, and they are in some ways. Magicians know that in other ways it is adults that are easier. Magicians take advantage of the adult proclivity to look to where the magician is pointing. To presume that one perceives the world invariably better than others is to be bigoted and adults are not infrequently this way inclined towards children, particularly in thinking that they know better than children over what the latter are crying out for. Though etymologically, 'bigoted' does not come from 'big,' it is still rather apt. The condition is so prevalent that psychologist Alice Miller can write a book entitled *Thou Shalt not be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*. Social historian Lloyd deMause can write that before Miller, “there were few voices telling the truth about our betrayal of our children.”⁶

Neither seen nor heard

There is that saying, “Children should be seen and not heard.” For intellectuals, ‘seen’ here means only being vaguely aware of them since developmental and cognitive psychologist Alison Gopnik and colleagues can say that for 2, 500 years children have

been disregarded as worthy of serious study.⁷ Their point is bolstered by the results of a Google search: the term 'adult' in conjunction with 'philosopher' gets a massive nineteen *times* as many hits as does 'baby' in conjunction with 'philosopher.'⁸

Psychologists Anthony Volk and Jeremy Atkinson could write as late as 2011, "History is typically defined as knowledge that records and explains past events. In this area of knowledge, children have been virtually ignored both by their contemporaries and by later historians."⁹ Again, a Google search bears this out. The term 'adult' in conjunction with 'historian' gets a whopping 194 *times* as many hits as does 'baby' in conjunction with 'historian.'¹⁰ Anthropologist Lawrence A. Hirschfeld can ask, "Why don't anthropologists like children?"¹¹

Gopnik *et al* mention a philosopher, who, apparently as a point of pride explained that "while he had, of course, seen children about, he had never actually spoken to one."¹² What, then, is the chance that this philosopher has actually learnt anything from caterpillars let alone children? We will see that the advice emanating from another philosopher, Bertrand Russell, on the raising of children is unsavoury.

Revealingly, as late as the second half of the 20th century, whereas the eight volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* mentions 'horse' 54 times (of course, the animal has proved to be very useful to humans historically, as I discuss elsewhere¹³), it only mentions 'baby' a total of five times. Does this not illustrate that it is possible to be so affected by one's professional station that one cannot see those that don't have it? One mention of 'baby' was to state the view of the influential pragmatist philosopher and psychologist William James that, "The baby is acquainted with the universe but he has not yet selected anything from the mass of sensation with which he is confronted. Thus, he knows nothing *about* anything"¹⁴ (emphasis mine). Even taking the statement as indisputably true, in its prejudice, as we will see, it completely misses that babies have a certain kind of knowing, as researchers have found, that is very adaptive and important. Later we will meet a child prodigy named after William James and find out how that child turned out after the overweening importance of knowing *about* over knowing others was pressed upon him from a very young age. The importance of the distinction between propositional knowledge and personal knowledge and the value of each has since been stressed by philosophers of knowledge or epistemologists, as we will see. Babies need professional philosophers after all.

During the millenia that children have been ignored by philosophers, they have been relatively successfully raised by parents, that is until modern times. There is an order in nature that we have increasingly violated by performing inadvertent experiments on a grand scale on our children, yet in our prejudices we struggle to see what this is doing to them.

Regarding children inappropriately

While philosophers certainly have an important place in the intellectual scheme of things, when they have paid attention to children, it has, notoriously, not boded well for the children. There weren't many in the 1700's, but if you are going to look for inspiration on child-rearing from a philosopher, why not from one who is also a mother such as Catharine Macaulay? Instead, many looked across the channel to the philosopher Jean-Jacque Rousseau who unceremoniously unparented himself by dumping each of his five children at a Foundling Hospital. Rushing to follow merely acclaimed philosophers about how to raise children as the West has done with Rousseau has led to terrible consequences for children as documented in my *Unnatural Intelligence: Crows and the Father expose the Cuckoo*.¹⁵ One philosopher who was inspired by Rousseau's call to toughen up children was the well-to-do philosopher Thomas Day (see accompanying image). Day, infamously, took upon himself the guardianship of two orphan girls to experiment on them quite deliberately by his own admission.¹⁶ Clearly, he regarded mother-figures as superfluous. To acquire the girls he circumvented the Foundling Hospital's regulations by committing a bald-faced lie that they were for a married friend. "If God created woman," it has been said, "Day was determined to go one step further and improve on that divine design."¹⁷ Twelve-year-old Ann Kingston and eleven-year-old Dorcas Car were renamed Sabrina and Lucretia. His purpose was to create an ideal wife for himself. To this end and to prepare Sabrina for life's hardships, Day's machinations included pouring hot wax on her bare skin, sticking pins into her arm, forcing her to wade into freezing water and firing pistols at her skirt without letting on whether they were loaded.¹⁸ It might be thought that he independently shared philosopher Rene Descartes's doubt that beings other than himself were anything more than automatons, but Day was rather humane towards animals. He regarded love as a "childish passion" saying, "Love I am firmly convinc'd is the Effect of Prejudice & Imagination; a rational Mind is incapable of it, at least in any great Degree."¹⁹



Evidently, a rational mind is not a sure fire antidote to regarding children inappropriately. The renowned mathematician Shannon Weaver, was contemptuous of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget even choosing children as subjects for research. He commented to Piaget, “How will you find interesting epistemological ideas, for example, the theory of relativity, in studying children who know nothing and who in any case are brought up in the intellectual tradition dating from Newton?”²⁰ It is true that children under six years old do not know about the conservation of matter as Piaget discovered. This does not mean they know nothing. They have what is now called genomic knowledge. They know how to learn from others, something that certain accomplished mathematicians and philosophers apparently lose somewhat later in life. When it comes to the developmental psychology of children, Weaver would have been much better off keeping quiet and listening attentively to Piaget. Evidently high intelligence is not an antidote against

prejudice. He could also have benefitted from asking a philosopher about the correct use of the term 'epistemological.' Philosophers, as I said, do also have their place.

The developmental psychologist William Crain mentions the case of a patient of his, a nine year old boy who found life so frightening that he “probably was on the verge of psychosis.” His parents did not want to have children. The mother's age and physical condition made it difficult for her to raise him. “Consequently, she wanted a good, well-disciplined boy—an adult, really—who would cause her no trouble. She tried to toilet-train him at 6 months of age, long before he showed any readiness to participate in the process. And when he began walking and vigorously exploring the world at 1 year, she became distressed; he was becoming a nuisance and “getting into things.” She even perceived his behavior as abnormal.”

Crain continues, “She had a fixed image of the good child she wanted and was unable to accept and follow her son’s natural inclinations. As a result, the boy developed an intense fear that any action he might take, unless approved by his parents beforehand, was extremely dangerous. He did not trust himself or his natural impulses.”²¹ The subject in the case remains anonymous and his life far away from any public scrutiny. As a result, almost everyone meeting him will, at best, just see him as a puzzle.

What we can do is a thought experiment as John Steinbeck does in *Of Mice and Men*²² with his memorable character, Lennie Small. While Lennie cut a formidable figure outwardly, inwardly he remained childish, emotionally naive and obsessed with small creatures such as mice. As strangely endearing as Lennie is, he nevertheless was dangerous with his combination of considerable strength, lack of finesse and an inclination to overreact. One day he accidentally kills a puppy and is distraught. The wife of another character, Curley, who is never named, lets him stroke her hair to calm him down, but again he becomes too rough. She starts to yell. He panics and in an attempt to stifle her, ends up accidentally killing her as well. Lennie is far from a conventional monster, but because he had developed into a malformed adult he nonetheless was a danger to himself and others. Physically, Lennie didn't look it, but he needed help, a great deal of it.

Another option is to explore the lives of the famous or infamous who have had unusual childhoods to examine the effects on their psyche. Things can happen in childhood that have a lasting, intricate and detrimental impact. Already there were clues in yesteryear such as the illustrative case of little William-Henry Ireland in the late 18th century (see accompanying image). He was sent home with a note explaining that his “... stupidity made his continued presence an injury to the school's reputation and his father's pocket.”²³ Mr. Samuel Ireland believed the school. Between the son and the father, it was actually the former that was clever and the latter credulous. William-Henry discovered this after his father, a William Shakespeare aficionado, was duped into delightedly buying items supposedly belonging to The Bard at shops in his birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon. William-Henry also discovered

that he was a natural at forging Shakespearean documents such as letters, deeds and even a “lost” play. By presenting these to his father, he could finally receive what he craved, his father's admiration. In truth, William-Henry was enough of a literary genius to fool even the scholars of his day and became an accomplished writer himself. He became not only a masterful forger, but even a forger of forgeries! William-Henry eventually confessed, but to his dying day his father refused to believe that his son was clever enough to pull it off. In large measure William-Henry, who became less than a law-abiding citizen, was the outcome of a father who was credulous about *things* that should have mattered less to him while remaining skeptical toward a *person* who should have mattered more. There are threads between professionals and personages that we would do well to consider. In the end Mr. Ireland died miserable and estranged from his son.



William-Henry has a character say in his *Henry the Second*, “The child that hath enough, will mewl for more. We from the cradle then are still the same, Eager to climb ambition's golden tree, Looking but upward to the topmost branch; Nor

thinking once, if back we would return, That we the boughs have bent, and broken so, That there is but to go on and gain the point, Or headlong we must totter down again.”²⁴ While William-Henry succeeded for a time, in fooling the best, he ended up the worst for it, broken and disbelieved, saying in his *Confessions* that he was involved in a business, “fraught with misery to myself, and which had caused an incalculable degree of unhappiness to that being whom I had fondly hoped to gratify by the production of the manuscripts.”²⁵

The pattern plays itself out in different ways, but while not excusing the offspring, we will find that parental dysfunction fosters the development of adults that may well have worldly success in many ways while being malformed in their psyche with all the affliction that this entails. Along the way we will unravel what I will call Steinbeck’s paradox. He has a character in his *Cannery Row* say, “It has always seemed strange to me ... The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism and self-interest, are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second.”²⁶ That strangeness may well come down to the strange way children have been raised. A malformed adult being a success story seems a violation of the natural order, and it is, but, as we will see, this may well only come out in future generations, sadly for the children.

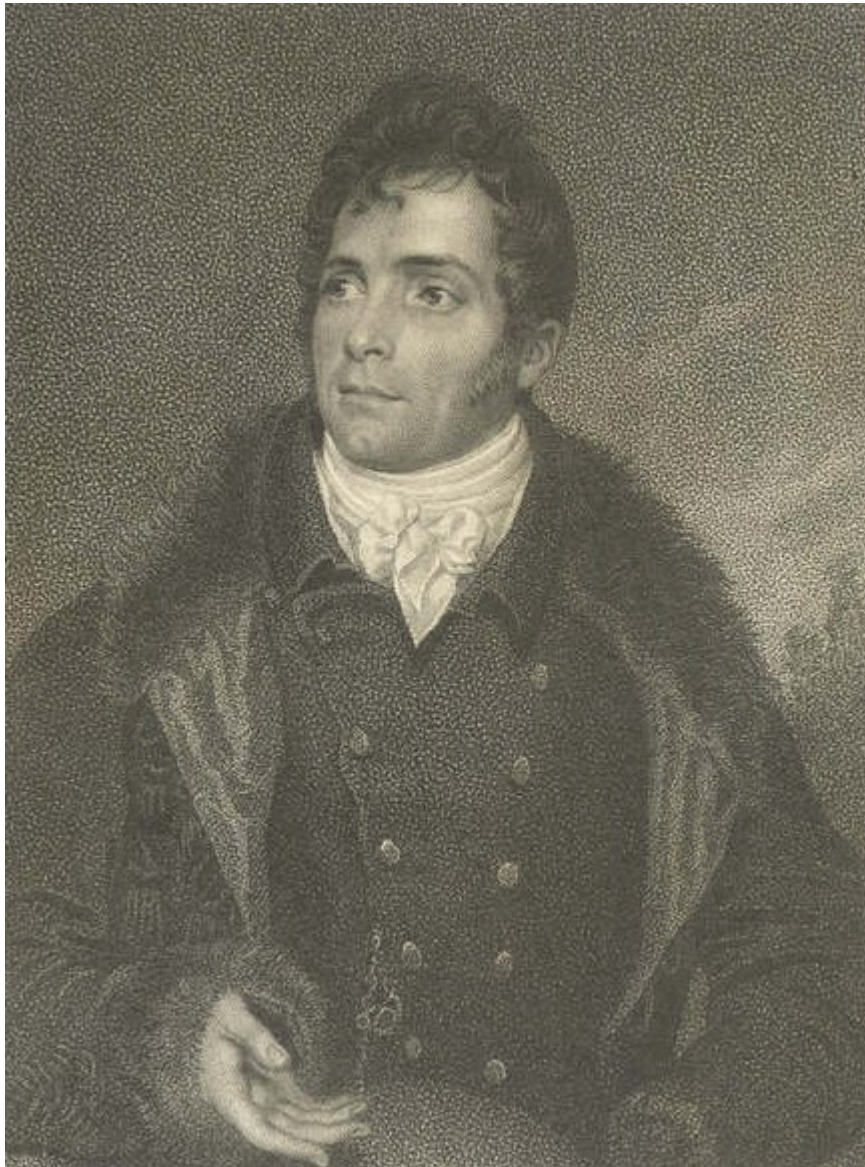
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John Steinbeck

A professional failure and personal success

The colourful story of Robert “Romeo” Coates (see accompanying image) bears out Steinbeck’s insight. Coates was a most robustly virtuous soul,²⁷ the inventor of the

modern parody who did benefit shows for widows and orphans.²⁸ He died in the same way as Pierre Curie, the co-discoverer of radioactivity, by being run over by a horse-drawn carriage. He is not commonly known for either of these things, however, but for being an utter failure at playing his favourite role, Romeo. Is the reason not that his invention was completely inadvertent, his compassionate nature of less professional interest and if anything there would be umbrage at likening him in any way to the acclaimed Curie? As a moral success and a professional joke, Coates was rather opposite to William-Henry Ireland.



He was born in Antigua in 1772 and raised a country-bumpkin by an extremely wealthy father, a plantation owner before getting sent off to Britain for his schooling. His early childhood did not prepare him for the slick sophistication and savvy of London in his adult years. His landlady was fraudulently extracting a cut from the destitute seeking his services. The naivete of Coates kept him from suspecting anything. When the truth came out, his reputation was in tatters. Society's knowledge,

from a distance, of Coates as a failed professional brand trumped knowing Robert as a person. Another soul would not have got taken in by the landlady, and if they had, might have paid off people to keep things quiet.

But it was on stage that he failed most melodramatically. His wealth allowed him to indulge his passion despite having miniscule talent. He would confidently appear in flamboyant, tasteless garb while going completely awry in inflection and emphasis in playing Shakespeare's Romeo. He would deviate from the script, repeat lines at will and add bizarre gestures. The phenomenon has been described thus, "He dragged Juliet from the tomb like a sack of potatoes; when finally he had to die, he put down his opera-hat for a pillow, and swept a place clean with a dirty silk handkerchief. Three times ... did this extraordinary idiot die for the amusement of the house."²⁹ This was the snickering audience at their most sanguine. Others would have crumpled before the barrages of verbal abuse and vegetable projectiles, but despite peculiarities in his upbringing he knew who he was before God.

That Coates could draw such crowds to watch him fail exposes our bias. It confirms that we champion professionalism over character. We would rather gloat over failure in the former than appreciate success in the latter. Reflecting this pattern in our historical narratives which the ChatGPT AI freely admits, it failed to pick up on the compassionate character of Coates when I asked what stood out about the man. Steinbeck is right. There is something deeply amiss in our bigotry.

A professional success and personal failure

In contrast to Coates, the eccentric genius Oliver Heaviside (see accompanying image) is a spectacular professional success story. Perhaps as an indication that he inherited more than his fair share of brains, his uncle, the renowned Sir Charles Wheatstone, was the inventor of the electric telegraph and the automatic transmitter. His name is memorialised in the electronic circuit, the "Wheatstone bridge." When I asked the ChatGPT AI what stood out about Heaviside, as with Coates, it predictably focused on the professional dimension, that he is celebrated for his revolutionary work on electromagnetism, theoretical innovations, mathematical and notational innovations and practical contributions to telecommunications. It did touch on his "unique personality," but only with respect to his eccentric academic independence, which some would regard as a virtue.



I can excuse ChatGPT for not mentioning that Heaviside always painted his fingernails cherry-pink. In the bigger scheme of things, this is neither here nor there. It is much more concerning that it did not mention that his “childhood problems left him “permanently deformed,””³⁰ although you wouldn't have said so from looking at him. “I have often wondered,” he said, “that I am not in a madhouse, incurably imbecile, brains all smashed and mixed up ...”³¹ Heaviside had issues with his *person*. In contrast to Coates, an indication of his self-assessment is that he always signed his name, Oliver Heaviside, W.O.R.M.³²

Perhaps revealing of his immaturity, Heaviside would consume nothing but milk for days on end. He required his premises to be dark and shuttered and to have such a

high temperature that it was described as, “Hot as hell.” This is just conjecture, but perhaps insecurities deep in his psyche triggered a throwback to our cave-dwelling past. When there are sabre-toothed tigers about, it is best to retreat to the recesses of a fire-heated cave. In some dimensions he was far ahead of their contemporaries. In others he was far behind. When in survival mode you double down on what you think you have.

Heaviside had great difficulty with other persons. Meeting a neighbour was for him a nasty business. He was aggressive and confrontational. He refused to work for money, but would readily accept handouts even while he insulted those giving it. His failure to look after himself got so bad that arrangements were made for him to stay with his unmarried sister-in-law, Mary Way. “... she was a kind, good-natured woman in her middle 60s when Oliver came to her, and she displayed extraordinary patience and tolerance for her sharp-tongued, crotchety housemate.”³³ He responded to the kindness by keeping her imprisoned as his virtual slave for seven years. If his mind was less brilliant, he might have been charged with kidnapping.

Maybe, just maybe, this all has something to do with less than adequate nurturing. Heaviside described his parents as sour and abusive, writing, “The following story is true. There was a little boy, and his father said, ‘Do try to be like other people. Don’t frown.’ And he tried and tried, but could not. So his father beat him with a strap ...”³⁴ If you cannot trust your own parents to love you, why should you entrust yourself to neighbours or strangers, or indeed the opposite sex or other races? Heaviside was misogynistic and racist. Unfortunately, biographical material on Heaviside is sparse. We know vastly more about his equations than his home life. As we will see later, there are other spectacularly successful professionals who were less than adequate in their person whose biographies are much more extensive and revealing in their childhoods.

Evidently, bigotry is not peculiar to intellectuals, for Jesus could say to His disciples, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). What wisdom could lead us to escape this morass? As with Lennie Small, we need a great deal of help. It isn’t intellectually very sophisticated, but perhaps we could let the natural instincts we have evolved and the example of a certain family, whose firstborn began life in a stable in Bethlehem, point us in edifying directions.

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven”

(Matthew 18:10).

[The Wisdom of Beautiful Airheads](#)

“You find a woman alone in the woods. She offers you your favorite fruit. She’s familiar. She tells you she’s weary and hurt and asks for shelter. As you lead her home, you realize why she’s familiar. She’s an old relative of the family! Of course! Got lost on her way to visit. And when you bring her home, everyone greets her after just a moment of confusion. Yes, yes, of course she’s remembered! She’s part of the family. She’s welcome.

Months pass. Family members go missing. Gone, without a trace. You seek comfort in each other. Your relative is larger now, but that just makes it more comforting when she hugs. She’s grown so much since she came home. She’s always lived here.

One day, you find yourself alone in the house. Everyone is gone. All that remains is some growth stuck to the floor. Like some kind of coffin. You feel like you should leave but you have nowhere to go. The growth is too large and heavy to move. You live around it. You long for your loved ones. Where have they gone?

Then one day the growth splits. And out crawls the woman, one of your relatives! Except, no. She’s different now. Inhuman. With fuzz and wings and she looks at you like an insect, towering above you. “Thank you for the hospitality, cousin.” And she flies away. Leaving you alone in an empty nest.”³⁵

This story is worthy of a dark fairy tale, yet there is a real creature that does this. Care to guess what it is? It is the Large Blue Butterfly, *Phengaris arion* (see accompanying image³⁶). Its victims are ants. With its lifestyle, this butterfly appears more diabolical than those animated hyenas. Maybe we need to rethink our image of butterflies and hyenas. At least with the latter you know what you are getting!



If the cockroach is our most loathed insect, the butterfly is our most loved. Indeed, ‘butterfly’ gets almost ten times the number of hits in a Google search than ‘cockroach’ does.³⁷ We must be attracted to the beauty of the butterfly rather than its brains because it does not have any. It has a suboesophageal ganglion, which is a big name for what passes for its tiny organ. The naturalist W. H. Bates lamented that butterflies were “creatures selected as the types of airiness and frivolity,” but predicted that their study, “instead of being despised, will some day be valued as one of the most important branches of Biological science.”³⁸ They are airheads and it shows. It is gender related, but this is what the entomologist Richard A. Jones says of the Small tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae* (see accompanying image),

“Small tortoiseshell
The tortoiseshell basked in sun light,
But thought that he’d have him a fight.
Whilst looking for dames,
He challenged the planes,
The bumbles, the birds and a kite.”³⁹



Jones says that if you want to find out the gender of the small tortoiseshell, just toss a pebble in its direction. A male will challenge it, the female will ignore it. The cockroach also has a suboesophageal ganglion for a brain, but is smarter than a butterfly, having relatively more advanced learning and memory capabilities. Simon Roberts says, “When a cockroach is under attack it doesn’t just run away randomly but takes its orientation, the presence of obstacles, illumination and wind direction into account before responding. It senses wind using two antennae-like structures at the rear of its abdomen, which have hairs that can detect wind velocity and direction. The time it takes a cockroach to sense something and respond is between 14 and 58 milliseconds, depending on whether it is moving or stationary.”⁴⁰ It can more flexibly navigate complex environments, memorise pathways and avoid danger based on past experience. Which are you more drawn to now, the beautiful butterfly or the less cloddish cockroach?

Butterflies must be doing something right though because there are more than four times as many species of them as there are cockroaches.⁴¹ One out of every ten animal species is a Lepidopteran (butterflies and moths). Butterflies are actually much more of a pest to humans than cockroaches, contrary to common perceptions. Eh, somewhat more accurately, their caterpillars are. The large white, *Pieris brassicae*, for instance, can cause 100% local crop loss.⁴² They are incredibly efficient feeding machines. The adults are strong fliers with a pronounced propensity to migrate. Together the stages mean major trouble for growers of cabbages, cauliflowers and other vegetables. It is estimated to cause over 40% yield loss annually on various crop vegetables in India. Are you ready to consider your aversions?

Since butterflies are such airheads, any apparent shrewdness happened upon them through evolution. Now, if Scripture commends grasshoppers for their extreme wisdom and they also only have a subesophageal ganglion, perhaps we could learn a certain wisdom from butterflies? While it won't be the sermon on the Mount, perhaps God would have us glean, sensibly of course, whatever wisdom we can even from those frolicking, ethereal beauties we call butterflies. I'm talking about real butterflies and their real caterpillars. And perhaps this wisdom can help us take another look at our own offspring so that we would see them more as they really are and foster their development as we really should.

A small brain solves a big problem

It turns out that some rather difficult challenges have been solved in butterflies. To appreciate the problem and their solution we have to put ourselves in their little shoes. To a butterfly mother-to-be, a vacant bush is a bounty. It is a little like a human finding a loaf of bread the size of a building. She needs this bounty because her offspring will assuredly eat themselves out of house and home. If she prayed it would be, "Give us this day our lifetime supply of bread." It would mean enough food for her many offspring for their entire lives. They couldn't move without stepping on it. No need to be very mobile. In fact, it is better not to be, in case the insect misplaces the food plant. It is an airhead, remember. Eh, no insinuations intended about your memory dear reader. What, then, is the problem? The trouble is that for such a little creature, suitable vacant plants may well be very widely separated from each other. To find one in the first place requires much mobility. The insect needs to be mobile, but it also needs to be sedentary. Conflicting demands are placed on it.

Does it go single-"mindedly" in just the one approach, the other or something in-between? Hmmm. What to do? Neither of these exclusively. It has a better tactic. It is sedentary during one phase of its life and mobile in another. What is known as complete metamorphosis could also be called a radical developmental division of labour. As Lewis so exquisitely described it, "In contrast to the lumbering plodding of corpulent caterpillars, butterflies strut like anorexic fashion models. They flit from flower to flower and tiptoe daintily on petals shopping for nectar to sip. They sail the wind on gossamer wings, flaunting their beauty for all to see. Indeed, caterpillars and butterflies act so differently that it is hard to believe they are different life stages of the same individual."⁴³ Charles Darwin mentions that a collector by the name of Renous left some caterpillars in the care of a girl so that they could turn into butterflies. The rumour-mill in the town, San Fernando in Chile, got going and when he returned he was arrested for heresy.⁴⁴ It may seem incredible that grown adults would discount what a child knew, but there you go.

Technically, evolutionary biologist Jens Rolff explains, "... complete metamorphosis is an adaptation permitting the decoupling of growth and differentiation, ... growth is

largely confined to the larval stage, while most development occurs in the pupal stage. ... This is clearly adaptive where food is plentiful in the short term, but the window of opportunity in which to eat it may be limited.”⁴⁵ Bear in mind that perspective is important here. The food source is only ephemeral from the human's point of view. From the caterpillar's point of view the food lasts for its entire childhood.

The caterpillar is essentially a sedentary, celibate, feeding machine. It eats many times its body weight in a single day. Talk about extreme eating! The worm-like caterpillar looks like a step down compared to the mobile juvenile cockroach. In running, cockroaches are the second fastest order of insects after beetles. The caterpillar has retained certain primitive features of its ancestors. A caterpillar does not have true legs and unlike the cockroach, cannot actually walk. Its prolegs are used for clasping while the body goes through undulating muscle contractions in a motion called retrograde peristalsis. Is this not going evolutionarily very backwards? Is not our abiding inclination to see the wonder only in the transformation of the ponderous caterpillar into the flying butterfly. This reflects both our prejudices and our biological naivete. Evolutionary wisdom says that more is not invariably better. The evolutionary transformation from a mobile juvenile ancestor to the sedentary caterpillar is as much a marvel. Indeed, caterpillars evolved⁴⁶ more than 100 million years *after* the evolution of flight in insects.⁴⁷ The larval stage is actually a very adaptive, advanced condition.⁴⁸ Yet, the term ‘larva’ comes from the Latin meaning mask, reflecting the prejudice that the stage is a masquerade with the adult being the real deal.⁴⁹

We saw earlier that humans prejudicially emphasise adult butterflies over caterpillars. In a Google search, the term ‘butterfly’ gets five *times* the number of hits as ‘caterpillar’ does.⁵⁰ In terms of proportion of lifespan, evolution has inverted this emphasis in Lepidoptera. In proportion to total lifespan, whereas in the American cockroach adulthood is emphasised at 60% in butterflies adulthood is de-emphasised at just 30%. The evolution of Lepidoptera seems to be based on the principle that small is great. It is a wonder that human adults are not more drawn to cockroaches!



The adult stage is still critical. The butterfly is a flying, frugal, extreme reproductive machine. Monarch butterflies (see accompanying image) travel thousands of kilometres⁵¹ and lay hundreds of eggs. Many species of butterfly do not feed at all as adults. Talk about extreme dieting! Unlike humans, butterflies are not into parental care and they don't need to be. Their offspring are as dimwitted as they are so there is no point trying to teach them anything. This does not mean they fail to provide. Butterfly mothers excel in providing their young all that they need to become mature adults. To the biologically naive, a caterpillar mucking around in the undergrowth may seem quite unconnected to flitting over the canopy as the adult butterfly, but the behaviour of the former is vital. There is a latency effect. For instance, feed pumpkin to a Monarch caterpillar (see accompanying image) in the last instar stage and all is fine. Do so before that and it will not metamorphosize properly into an adult.⁵² An apparent trifle will prevent it from migrating those impressive thousands of kilometres.



The pupa is as mobile as the bush it is on, but it is only outwardly doing nothing. The pupal stage seems very counter-intuitive. While wrapped in the chrysalis, the insect cannot feed, fight or flee. And if you looked inside you would find larval tissues literally dying.⁵³ Yet, this stage is essential to the overall strategy. For the butterfly to fly, the caterpillar must die. Far from nothing happening, a most amazing transformation is taking place.

A developmental division of labour is so effective because each stage does what each stage does well. Metamorphosis is a marvellous strategy for dealing with the opposing pressures of rich, but highly dispersed food sources.⁵⁴ The insects that have a pronounced developmental division of labour such as beetles, flies, bees, wasps, ants, butterflies and moths are supremely successful. They account for the majority of all animal species.⁵⁵ Maybe, just maybe, they are onto something. Human adults need to put this in their basket and furl it: most adults on the planet are insects!

Butterflies have parallel strategies for other opposing pressures. For instance, they need showy wings to attract mates, but camouflaged wings to avoid being seen by predators. Do they go just brightly coloured, just cryptic or something in between? Some species have discovered that the best strategy is neither. When fluttering around a mate to impress, they display the gaudy upper sides of their wings. When sitting still for concealment, they fold their wings, hiding the upper sides and displaying the drab colour of the undersides.

In the oldest book of the Bible it is written, “But ask the animals, and they will teach you” (Job 12:7). What then, do these insects teach? “If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies,” goes the saying. To this should be added, “If it wasn't for caterpillars there would be no butterflies and vice versa. Caterpillars do caterpillars well, but butterflies badly, also vice versa.

Each stage has its critical place. A caterpillar never would of course, but it need not pine for flight. It is always in the prime of its life since each stage of life is a vital part of God's scheme of things. It is exactly at the age and stage that God wants it to be. Blessed are the airheads because they do not question this. As we will see, it takes adult creatures with far bigger heads to fail to see how very different their young are to them and how critically important it is for them to be this way.

**“But ask the animals, and they will
teach you” (Job 12:7).**

Kiddypillars

Children, as with caterpillars, are very different from adults. Charles Darwin, who was an attentive and devoted father, has said, “You will be astonished to find how the whole mental disposition of your children changes with advancing years. A young child and the same when nearly grown, sometimes differ almost as much as do a caterpillar and butterfly.”⁵⁶ To bring attention to their distinctness it might be an idea to call children 'kiddypillars.' Perhaps inclinations to see children as less than adults is a rather limiting, inaccurate perspective. The term 'development' is loaded, suggesting that adulthood is an advance and it is, but only in some ways. In other ways, as we will see, it is actually a regression. That God made “All creatures great and small” applies to butterflies and caterpillars, yes, but it also applies to adults and children. The features of the human child are not defects (see accompanying image; they have specifically evolved to be this way. There is wisdom in having childhood as there is in caterpillar-hood. In some ways, children are greater than adults.



Recall that the marked difference between caterpillars and butterflies emerged as a solution to the countervailing problem of needing to be both sedentary and mobile. The insects hit upon the very effective strategy of a developmental division of labour.

The pronounced transformation from child to adult in *Homo sapiens* also has something to do with a developmental division of labour strategy to deal with a conflicting problem, but a very different one.

Perhaps the most striking feature of human childhood is how prolonged it is. Anthropologist Ashley Montagu notes, “There is no placental mammal that remotely approaches the human in duration of infantile immaturity— not even such animals as the elephant, rhinoceros, camel, and the wild ass, whose fetuses spend a longer time in the womb.”⁵⁷ Humans have the longest childhood of all primates, both absolutely and in proportion to lifespan. Whereas many try to rush children into adulthood, nature deemed childhood such an important phase for humans that it led children to linger there.

“There is no placental mammal that remotely approaches the human in duration of infantile immaturity— not even such animals as the elephant, rhinoceros, camel, and the wild ass, whose fetuses spend a longer time in the womb.”

(Anthropologist Ashley Montagu)

Since childhood is such a vulnerable stage, there must be an extremely good reason for it to become so protracted, and there is. You know the old saying that begins, “If at first you don't succeed ...” Well, what is the best way forward? Should we brainstorm something different or try, try and try again, be lateral or single-minded? Should we play around with many things or persevere with one, go dogged or go doggy. Each strategy has a great deal going for it, but they seem to be mutually exclusive. What to do?

Lateral thinking or single-mindedness?

The problem was solved by doing *both* but during different phases of life. Children are the imaginative experimenters while adults are the resolute refiners. While a father is away perfecting his career as a plumber, his child is being a fireman, a cowboy, a doctor, a sailor, a pilot, a cop and a robber, all in one morning. Indeed, and this cannot be emphasised enough, children are preparing for professions that do not yet exist. African-American poet Nikki Giovanni put it thus, “Children must invent their own games and teach the old ones how to play.”⁵⁸ The fresh approach of the child or novice and the experienced approach of the adult or professional each have their advantages and their pitfalls.

Too appreciate the value of lateral thinking consider the following problem that preschoolers are able to solve but apparently stumps adults⁵⁹:

8809 -> 6
7111 -> 0
6666 -> 4
7652 -> 1
3368 -> 3
2581 -> ?

Are you able to solve it? Many adults are unable to solve the problem at all because they get stuck on thinking in terms of numerics or mathematical equations. Instead, young children think outside this box and in terms of shapes. The number of holes or loops in the numbers determines the pattern. For instance, the digit 0 has 1 loop, 8 has 2 loops and 1 has none. The number 2581, then, has a total of 2 loops. This simple example illustrates that to bring adult numeracy to a problem can well be inappropriately adultlike or adultish.

The opposite happened in my hostel during my high school years. Some boys were given the job, as punishment, of writing the letters 'O H' on the backrest of dozens of chairs. The 'O H' stood for the hostel's name, Oribi House. Since 'O' and 'H' read the same way upside down, one of the boys got the bright idea of turning the chairs upside down to make the task easier. Does lateral thinking invariably turn the tables on experience? No! When the job was all done, the chairs were turned the right way up and read "HO HO HO ..." I wondered whether the housemaster that dished out the punishment read it as a mocking retort!

The differences between the orientations of child and adult do not always converge well. A friend of ours popped into a pharmacy to get something with her young daughter, Margie, in tow. No doubt single-minded in their profit agenda, the establishment had the brainwave of stacking bottles upon bottles of perfume in the shape of a pyramid on the floor. It must have been an impressive display. Margie toddled over and experimentally removed one bottle from the bottom. The lot came crashing down. Our friend blurted out a very embarrassed apology. The proprietor replied impassively, "We are insured. Get out." Maybe paying the excess reinforced the realisation that there are other considerations besides profits! Including a child among their consultants might be an idea!

The transformation in *Homo sapiens* is every bit as wondrous as the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly. We indeed have in our species another developmental division of labour. Just to be very clear, the wonder is not just a caterpillar becoming a butterfly but that the insect does both caterpillar and butterfly, and that humans do both child and adult. Children are good at figuring which kind of adult to become out of the myriads of possibilities that keep changing as the world changes. Adults are good at specialising at being one particular kind of professional adult. As Alison Gopnik says metaphorically, “The caterpillars and butterflies do different things well.”⁶⁰ This developmental division of labour is unavoidable as it is effective as a strategy.

It has been said that “In childhood, we yearn to be grown-ups. In old age, we yearn to be kids. It just seems that all would be wonderful if we didn't have to celebrate our birthdays in chronological order.”⁶¹ But if I hanker after the advantages of another stage, age or season, I miss the opportunities of the current one. “There was no respect for youth when I was young, and now that I am old, there is no respect for age - I missed it coming and going”⁶² wrote J.B. Priestly. Our biology and Scripture line up against this malaise in contemporary culture.

The Apostle Paul said to Timothy “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young” (1 Timothy 4:12). What the young lack in experience, they make up for in energy. What the elderly lack in vigour, they make up for, or should make up for in experience and wisdom. Job asks rhetorically, “Is not wisdom found among the aged? (Job 12:12).” If grey hair is a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31), wrinkles are the pleats of a royal robe. Each stage of life can be celebrated.

Real and fictional adults

Whereas the adult Lepidopteran of a species needs to do precious few things well, between them adult humans specialise in as many things as there are professions. Some adult humans are about as sedentary as a caterpillar. The philosopher Immanuel Kant spent his entire life in the city of his birth, then called Königsberg, rarely venturing out. In contrast, the travels of David Livingstone somewhat approach that of the astounding migrations of the Monarch butterfly.

We sometimes speak as if what makes a person an adult or child is perfectly clear for all times and places. While in the “developed” world not knowing the letters of the alphabet would be considered quite infantile, this was the common condition of adults prior to the middle ages. But how many literate adults today know how to track an animal? Relative to our hunter-gatherer forbears it is we in the “developed” world that would look quite infantile. Even in prehistoric times what an adult looked like varied considerably depending on ecological niche and culture. It is the very plasticity of humans that has made us able to migrate across the globe and survive successfully with so very many different lifestyles as a single species. In contrast, each butterfly

species tends to fixate on flying to one or a few plant species as the food source for their offspring.

The diversity of professionals in the modern world is so accentuated that the idea that a human adult is one clearly defined thing is a ridiculous fiction about as fantastical as that lion in *The Lion King*. What is a piece of cake for one human would make another professional look quite infantile if he tried it. Imagine the philosopher Bertrand Russell, even as a healthy young man, trying to play professional football or Arnold Schwarzenegger trying to give a lecture on Quantum Mechanics. It would look comically childish. On the other hand, Bertrand Russell, trying to play to his philosophical strengths on the football field would be comically adultish. In a world in which an individual's profession counts so much, in reality all “adults” are really children in most respects and specialised adults in just a few. Today human adults come in at least as many kinds as there are professions. Effectively, adult *Homo sapiens* come as different subspecies. How often does an action movie star make babies with a professor of philosophy? An important question is knowing when to play adultlike and childlike roles as an adult.

There is a very needed word ‘adultist’ that means biased in favour of adults and against children. As evidence of that bias, we have a word, ‘childish,’ for being inappropriately childlike but no word for being inappropriately adultlike. There is a word, ‘adultish,’ but it means mature or suitable for an adult.⁶³ ‘It does not have the negative connotations that ‘childish’ has. ‘Precocious’ is similarly too positive and is restricted to children that are adultlike. For reasons that will become clear, I think that we need a word for adults acting inappropriately adultlike and vote that we change the meaning of ‘adultish’ to mean this. We will later see that adultism fosters the development of the adultish.

These points came home to me when I was given the job of coordinating a Master's course. It was rather largely an administrative role and I was, administratively, a kid. It got a bit much and I resigned. The job was given to a philosopher colleague. I visited him in his office as part of handing over the baton and found him surrounded by paperwork, giggling like a little boy. When I asked him what was up, he replied that he always giggles when he does not know what he is doing. To me it was a waste of a keen philosophical brain. Why not give the job to someone with a keen *administrative* brain instead?

Fast forward to a conference of scientists, theologians and pastors. We had an extraordinarily competent event organiser. She may have been ordinary, but she looked extraordinary to me. Her attention to detail seemed flawless. She picked up that a utensil was missing at my dinner place before I noticed anything amiss. Considering the number of presenters and delegates, how she did it was completely mystifying to me.

Perhaps quite understandably, she then got increasingly maternal towards me. Though I was in my fifties and she was one or two decades younger, she told me that I needed a jersey for a certain outing. On our return she noticed that I had forgotten it on the bus. You know the definition of a jersey, right? It is something you have to wear when your mother is cold. I felt like such a kid! I could almost hear my mother's voice, "If your head wasn't attached to your body you would forget that too."

After the conference the presenters had a postmortem. We sang the event organisers praises, then we got into evaluating the content. Perhaps with her being on such a roll with the organising, she now tried to add her voice to the intellectual discussion. It sounded pretentious. It went awkwardly quiet for a few moments and then we carried on. She had become so used to her adult role that she tried to keep it up even though in the academic arena she was now the child. She was being adultish. It was a silly little incident, but is illustrative. Her stance got no traction among the presenters, but how about a philosopher among psychologists or the other way around?

In the context of very rightfully countering the notion that childlike ways of knowing are primitively inferior relative to scientific and adult ways of knowing, developmental psychologists Alison Gopnik and colleagues write, "Bertrand Russell made a nice remark about Aristotle's claim that women had fewer teeth than men. The surprising thing wasn't so much that Aristotle was wrong but that all he had to do to find out he was wrong was ask Mrs. Aristotle to open her mouth, and count. Children, after all, are all around us; we don't need expeditions to distant continents or high-tech laboratories to observe them. All we had to do was ask them to open their mouths, and listen. For 2,500 years, nobody did."⁶⁴

Who exactly do they mean by "we?" While philosophers weren't listening, mothers had been, until, as we shall see, they started listening to certain philosophers such as Bertrand Russell. Actually Russell got his philosophy, specifically his epistemology, very wrong with Aristotle as I discuss elsewhere.⁶⁵ He also comes very adrift on child psychology, as we will also see.

While you may not need expeditions or laboratories to study children, it is still time-consuming to do the meticulous research as these developmental psychologists note. Human minds are flexible enough so that a philosopher could do it to some extent as in the case of Socrates or a zoologist as in the case of Jean Piaget with the help of his psychologist wife. But, the hard graft still has to be put in to become qualified to speak. The epistemologically wise wouldn't ask psychologists to distinguish molluscs from crustaceans. These developmental psychologists mistakenly called Piaget a "crustaceans expert."⁶⁶ The wise, God forbid, also wouldn't defer to Bertrand Russell on child development. We need all sorts of adults including developmental psychologists, philosophers, mothers, event organisers, scientists and theologians and we need them to know their rightful place.

All of us as parents need to open our ears and listen to our children, not to know about their cognitive development (best left to developmental psychologists) but to know *them*. There is a great difference between *knowing about* child development and knowing your child and his particular nurturing needs. As we will see, it is entirely possible to be proficient in the former while being dismal in the latter.

The evolutionary advance of childlikeness

While certain philosophers in particular have struggled in coming to realise the exceeding importance of childhood in *Homo sapiens*, evolution “figured” it out a long time ago as did certain poets. Alexander Pope (see accompanying image), for instance wrote, “A longer care Man’s helpless kind demands; That longer care contracts more lasting bands.”⁶⁷ You could say that *Homo sapiens* has specialised in childhood since human adults resemble the young of our primate relatives. As paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould avers, “In feature after feature, we resemble the juvenile stages of other primates—and this includes such markers of intellectual status as our bulbous cranium and relatively large brain.”⁶⁸ The pattern is conspicuous and old hat for evolutionary biologists and has been termed paedomorphosis (child-shaped) or neoteny. Humans have advanced evolutionarily by becoming more childlike! Notice, by the way, that this advance did not happen by any conscious ambition in humans. Quite the contrary. It happened unconsciously as a byproduct of evolutionary processes.



**“A longer care Man’s helpless kind
demands; That longer care contracts
more lasting bands.”**

(Alexander Pope)

The developmental division of labour strategy comes with a benefit and a cost. The benefit, dubious for some, is that parents get to enjoy the presence of their children for longer. The cost, of course, is time. The prolonged childhood that is so essential requires protracted love and protection from parents. Nature saw fit to make a massive deal over the connection between mother and child. Journalist and mother of two Katharine Whitehorn put it thus, “I blame Rousseau, myself. ‘Man is born free’,

indeed. Man is not born free, he is born attached to his mother by a cord and is not capable of looking after himself for at least seven years (seventy in some cases).”⁶⁹ You could say that a child needs to be a mommy's boy so that he won't be one for seventy years. Children are fully-formed in their own dependent way for their particular phase.

Anthropologist Ashley Montagu expresses it plainly, “For his adequate healthy development the human infant requires, beyond all else, a great deal of tender loving care.”⁷⁰ Or, as educator Jess Lair put it, “Children are not things to be molded, but are people to be unfolded.”⁷¹ Similarly, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson said, “There is in every child at every stage a new miracle of vigorous unfolding, which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility for all.”⁷² It is critical that childhood is fully expressed for the full duration for the sake of their full development into adults. Mother and author Marcelene Cox said it well, “Raising children is like baking bread: it has to be a slow process or you end up with an overdone crust and an underdone interior.”⁷³

**“For his adequate healthy development
the human infant requires, beyond all
else, a great deal of tender loving care.”**

(Anthropologist Ashley Montagu)

Attachment to the mother is particularly important for the development of the child into a *socially mature* adult. This is something grasped by philosopher Mary Midgley despite not being a developmental psychologist because she was a mother that allowed her family life to help shape her thoughts as a philosopher. She also paid attention to those adults we call evolutionary biologists. She wrote, “Creatures that have to deal with helpless and demanding young must be capable of genuine kindness and tolerance. This makes it possible for fellow-adults to tap these resources if they behave in a childlike way ... And it is on such a foundation (however unsuited to human dignity) that the serious business of social life is actually grounded.”⁷⁴

The mythical self-made man affected by his cleverness but naive in developmental anthropology may well see his *rationality* as quintessentially setting him apart from other animals. Not quite. The great apes have that. Neuroscientist and cognitive psychologist Michael Tomasello points out that it is *socially normative agency* that sets us apart.⁷⁵ The trouble with the womb is that it is socially limited. It has often been pointed out that the human baby remains essentially a foetus for a year or so after birth. A large part of the reason for this is that so much of the baby's development has to happen *facing* his mother *so that* he can face others. The mother's

role in making a distinctively human baby that is setup for adulthood does not end at birth. So very much of what separates humans from other animals develops later through childhood. The physical umbilical cord is replaced with a social and emotional one that is no less important.

Tomasello says, “When I call apes “rational,” I do not just mean in the economic sense of “pursuing their goals intelligently,” which all mammals do, but rather that they operate *logically* and *reflectively*.”⁷⁶ What, then, does *Homo sapiens* have that they don't? He continues, “... individuals came together to form socially shared agencies— socially constituted feedback control systems— that could pursue shared goals that no individual could attain on its own.”⁷⁷ The mother-child relationship is critical for setting up the kind of adults that can participate in those socially constituted feedback control systems. That social cord attaching mother to child, as Melvin Konner points out, is no innovation, but crucial for swathes of adaptive reasons including , “... to prevent predation, ... temperature maintenance, nutrition, hydration, transfer of passive immunity, and the first steps in enculturation. It also influences future intimate relationships ...”⁷⁸

In many ways mother and baby are in a symbiotic relationship just as the lichen exists only as a combination of algae and fungi. This helps to explain why babies say “dada” before they say “mama.” A baby begins life so attached to its mother that it takes a while for it to differentiate itself from her. Indeed, the paediatrician Donald Winnicott famously said that “there is no such thing as a baby,” meaning that babies make no sense without a mother. Just as caterpillars need to cling to leaves to become butterflies, so children need to cling to their mothers to become adults, not just any adults, but adults capable of loving others. Montagu says, “The child is born not only with the need to be loved, but with the need to love others. This dual need remains with us to the end of our lives. The *only way* one learns to love is by being loved”⁷⁹ (emphasis mine). His crucial point is echoed by psychologist Alice Miller, “Children who are respected learn respect. Children who are cared for learn to care for those weaker than themselves. Children who are loved for what they are cannot learn intolerance. In an environment such as this they will develop their own ideals, which can be nothing other than humane, since they grow out of the experience of love.”⁸⁰

**“The only way one learns to love is
by being loved.”**

(Ashley Montagu)

Loved children are the pillars upon which adulthood stands. The preacher Henry Ward Beecher said it so well, “The mother’s heart is the child’s schoolroom.” and

“What the mother sings in the cradle goes all the way down to the coffin.”⁸¹ Here is another reason to call children “kiddypillars” except that there is the danger that this will lead some adults to superciliously dismiss them as bug-like!

Gopnik adds, “It isn’t just that without mothering humans would lack nurturance, warmth, and emotional security. They would also lack culture, history, morality, science, and literature.”⁸² To this list can be added spirituality. Yes, spirituality also depends upon childhood, as we will see. Gopnik put the point positively. As we will see, the negative is true as well. Children that are deprived of a childhood become the fractured pillars upon which social ills, authoritarian governments, crime, ungodliness and a host of other malaises emerge. Montagu again, “Like some larval form that has been deprived of the experiences necessary for its metamorphosis into a mature form, the human infant, deprived of those stimulations necessary for his emotional growth and development, will fail to undergo that transformation into the mature healthy creature he might have been.” This is a deprivation we, in civilized societies, visit upon millions of potential human beings, resulting in untold numbers of human tragedies.”⁸³

“Like some larval form that has been deprived of the experiences necessary for its metamorphosis into a mature form, the human infant, deprived of those stimulations necessary for his emotional growth and development, will fail to undergo that transformation into the mature healthy creature he might have been.”

(Ashley Montagu)

While trying to be nobly exhortative, the television producer Joan Cooney got it completely wrong, then, when she said, “Cherishing children is the mark of a civilized society.”⁸⁴ It is actually the mark of hunter-gatherer societies. Montagu notes that it is children of non-literate cultures that are, “seldom out of the arms of some adult or older child”⁸⁵ (see accompanying image). Developmental psychologist Michael E. Lamb and anthropologist Barry S. Hewlett conclude in an anthology, “Regardless of ecology, for example, hunting and gathering groups are characterized by frequent and extended breastfeeding and extraordinarily high levels of parent-child physical contact and proximity, especially in comparison with the practices not only of parents in industrial societies, but also in contrast with the practices of neighboring

groups of farmers exploiting very similar social ecologies. These characteristic patterns of forager childcare may in part account for the relatively long interbirth intervals that characterize hunting and gathering societies.”⁸⁶



Grandmotherhood

There is not only a bias against children, but also against grandmothers. Concerning the evolutionary significance of grandmothers, anthropologist Sarah Hrdy says, “Truth to tell, anthropologists have not always been interested in this subject.” She notes that researchers such as the “legendary ethnographer C.W.M. Hart ... did not consider the behavior of old women worth studying.” In contrast, evolution deemed this stage so significant that humans are one of precious few species, such as Orcas and Indian elephants, that have non-reproductive longevity in females. It is as if women go into a third, post-menopausal stage after adult. This is a special extra division of labour. The emphasis in this stage is social cohesion *for the sake of the children*. Survival of offspring even after reaching adulthood, is linked to the presence of both the mother and grandmother. In these species and that includes humans, offspring do not need less than parental care. They need more. Emphasising that this condition is characteristic of our hunter-gatherer forebears, Hrdy summarises an anthology on the importance of grandmothers, “Cooperative breeding with long childhoods and long-lived mothers sets the stage for selection to favor longer postmenopausal life spans.”⁸⁷

There are those, that despite being well-to-do in a “civilised” country, approach parenting more in the style of hunter-gatherers. What becomes of their children? Let’s see.

The “brood” of an unrecognised father

Charles Darwin is either celebrated or vilified for his professional role in developing the theory of evolution while ignored for his personal role in the development of his children. Him going counter-culture in denying special creation caused a stir. Him going counter his well-to-do culture in spending a great deal of time with his children was a trifle. The ChatGPT AI did not even mention the term 'father' when I asked what stood out about him, illustrating, as we saw in the case of Robert Coates, the human bias in historical narratives. Evolutionary biologist and Darwinophile Tim Berra can write in *Darwin and His Children: His Other Legacy* that of the “plethora” of biographies of Darwin, “... his children, with the exception of Annie, are treated more or less as footnotes to his life, and after Charles’s funeral, the accounts of his children’s lives cease.”⁸⁸ Psychologist David Cohen notes, “Darwin was truly remarkable. He not only wrote *On the Origin of the Species* but was an astute child psychologist. He was also a loving father and had no inhibitions about expressing his feelings about his ‘brood’, as he sometimes called them.”⁸⁹ We noted earlier that Darwin saw that children and adults could be about as different as caterpillars are from butterflies. Was he especially perceptive of children and how did his own turn out? Let's see.

One can glean from Darwin's notebooks that his psychology began very promisingly. He committed himself to observing each child, “I at once commenced to make notes on the expressions he exhibited, looking for the earliest signs of each emotion to see the emergence of human nature: how our ancestors became what we are. I felt convinced, even at this early period, that the most complex and fine shades of expression must all have a gradual and a natural origin.”⁹⁰ For one family, his offspring made an impressive sample size. His biographer and great-great-granddaughter, Ruth Padel, said, “He will carry on observing with all ten” for as long as sixteen years.

A confounding factor is that Darwin was actually aware of and interested in the emotions of his subjects unlike certain successful psychologists that we will meet later. He wrote of “... the unspeakable tenderness of young children ...”⁹¹ Darwin did allow his paternal love and compassion to mingle with his curiosity, but it overrode it. Biographers James and Kent Loy remark on his relationship with their child, William, nicknamed Doddy, “In no sense a reserved Victorian father, Charles alternated making notes on Doddy's behavior with dispensing hugs and kisses.”⁹² Darwin says in his own notes, “... anxious to observe accurately the expression of a crying child but sympathy with his grief spoiled all my observation.”⁹³ Darwin the loving father trumped him as the meticulous researcher in psychology (see accompanying image of him with his son William). One of his very typical comments came after their third child was born. He was “very much in love with his three little chickens.”⁹⁴



There was a penchant for frivolity in Charles and his wife Emma (see accompanying image) that must have played a significant part in impeding dispassionate research. 'Played' is the operative word. It is easy for adults to gloss over something so frivolous as his child's play. David Cohen doesn't. He opens his account of Darwin as a parent with a quote by the naturalist's daughter, Henrietta, "My father took an unusual delight in his babies and we have all a vivid memory of him as the most inspiring of playfellows ..."⁹⁵ Indeed Cohen says, "The Darwins saw more of their children than most of their class and time."⁹⁶



“Both Charles and Emma like to play with the children,” write James and Kent Loy, “although Charles’s play bouts were more frequent and physical. He loved to “opera dance” his daughters on his knees and to roughhouse gently with both the boys and girls. When the children ran their hands up under his shirt, Charles would growl like the hairy bear they imagined they were feeling.”⁹⁷ Such deference was given to the children that they were given the run of the house. It was said that the only place you were unlikely to see a child was the nursery. When Darwin voiced disapproval over young Lenny's antics on a sofa, the child replied, “Well then I advise you to go out of the room.”⁹⁸ Such impudence directed at another father, and especially a stepfather, is potentially risky, as we will see.

Special attention must be also placed on that confounding variable called a mother. Cohen notes, “The family was playful, far more playful than Darwin’s own family had been, a blessing he attributed to Emma’s influence.”⁹⁹ What this suggests is that good fathers are prepared to receive wisdom from their children's mothers. We will meet a psychologist father who did not do that and we will see how that turned out for his children.

Another confounding variable was the Darwins love for each other. Biographers James and Kent Loy say, “Despite their somewhat unusual path to the altar—Charles being initially more taken with the *idea* of marriage than with winning a particular woman, and Emma believing that they would stay in a state of cousinly affection indefinitely—after the wedding they fell quickly and very deeply in love.”¹⁰⁰ That Darwin was chronically ill throughout their married life only served to strengthen their bond. They add, “Emma positively thrived on caring for Charles, while he in turn gratefully gave himself up to her tender care ... For more than forty years, Charles would depend on Emma for peace of mind and body; for her part, Emma would never waver or grow resentful in that responsibility. Indeed, the caregiver-patient relationship would become an important channel for these two undemonstrative people to express their mutual love and devotion.”¹⁰¹

It has often been remarked that the love between spouses has a marked influence on children. It must surely have helped to keep Charles from being taken with the *idea* of children over their children themselves, making him less inclined to pursue research at their emotional expense. In his biography of Darwin psychiatrist and psychologist John Bowlby said, “... he was father to a large, affectionate and united family ...”¹⁰²

And the impact of the Darwin's love on their children? It was returned. After Darwin's death, Emma wrote to one of their sons, “I will tell you that the entire love and veneration of all you dear sons for your Father is one of my chief blessings and binds us together more than ever.”¹⁰³ Illustrative of their charmingly affectionate bond is how endearing Darwin found their eldest daughter, Little Annie's “most clinging fondling nature ... she would at almost any time spend half-an-hour in arranging my hair, “making it”, as she called it, “beautiful” ... She liked being kissed ... and all her habits were influenced by her loving disposition.”¹⁰⁴ As to the personal development of their children, by all accounts, they turned out very well indeed. A colleague of one of his sons wrote, “My very dear friend Leonard Darwin . . . was surely the kindest and wisest man I ever knew.”¹⁰⁵

A great deal of attention is placed on Darwin's fake deathbed confession and not nearly enough on what Little Annie (see accompanying image) said for real on her deathbed at just ten years of age as she succumbed to illness. Lady Hope supposedly heard Darwin say, “How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done.”¹⁰⁶ With his declining faculties, Darwin could still fall back on his professional stature. Little Annie, as “less than an adult,” and with little energy to speak let alone

make some grand confession, could only fall back on her personhood however little she was. We could quite excuse her for some churlish entitlement under the circumstances, yet this is how her father remembers it, “In the last short illness, her conduct in simple truth was angelic; she never once complained; never became fretful; was ever considerate of others; and was thankful in the most gentle, pathetic manner for everything done for her. When so exhausted that she could hardly speak, she praised everything that was given her, and said some tea “was beautifully good.” When I gave her some water, she said “I quite thank you”; and these, I believe were the last precious words ever addressed by her dear lips to me.”¹⁰⁷ At not even halfway to the age of majority her disposition already revealed a most delightfully beautiful person and presaged a mother that any child would be most fortunate to have. All indications are that Little Annie had a distinct sense of her own personhood. Her father wrote, “She held herself upright, and often threw her head a little backwards, as if she defied the world in her joyousness.”¹⁰⁸



In all, three of Darwin's children perished, likely because of inbreeding. Little Annie benefitted in emotional well-being in that her parents went against their well-to-do culture in spending so much time with her. It cost her in physical well-being that her parents went with their well-to-do culture in marrying each other as first cousins. With Darwin's expertise in natural history, he suspected as much.¹⁰⁹ Theirs was an unnatural experiment, not in parental care, but in breeding.

Even though they did not have Darwin's expertise in natural history, the common practice in our hunter-gatherer forebears is so-called exogamy - marrying outside one's group. They had knowledge not *about* inbreeding in the scientific sense but a genomic knowledge bequeathed to them by evolution. The irony is that they had more wisdom in this matter than the father of evolution by natural selection. Perhaps, with some humility, we can benefit from the wisdom of people who, from our perspective,

happen to be non-professionals, including children, mothers and hunter-gatherers. If a natural history genius can succumb in some respects to the foibles of sophisticated culture, why should the rest of that culture think they are immune?

Darwin tried to get the legislature to allow a question in the National Census in order to facilitate investigation into the effects of inbreeding on human society, but to no avail.¹¹⁰ They placed greater priority on people's privacy. Apparently they had difficulty receiving from both their genomes and the genius.

Darwin was no less a success as a parent as he was as a professional. Isn't the latter accoladed because it is a rare, specialised role whereas the former is a common garden variety one shared by many, including many animal species? Human children are a dime a dozen and, unlike physical well-being, their emotional well-being is relatively invisible. It is perhaps only in the event of their rarity and priority given to their joy, that successful parenting will become appropriately celebrated. Cherishing offspring is the mark of primates in general, including monkeys, that is unless researchers intrude with callous experiments.

The unloved monkeys of a callous researcher

The first sets of experiments that were conducted on maternal love were, scientifically speaking, very methodically conducted by a very successful psychologist. Fortunately, for humans, the subjects were monkeys. Very unfortunately for the subjects, the researcher was a self-confessed sadist by the name of Harry Harlow (see accompanying image). While many, as we will see, were conducting uncontrolled experiments in depriving children of maternal love, Harlow was conducting controlled ones on monkeys. The experiments were completely unethical. But, since the experimental controls were so watertight, the results were unequivocal.



Harlow took baby rhesus monkeys and isolated them from their mothers for various lengths of time. The effects were dramatic. After a month of solitary confinement some were so wrecked that they refused to eat and starved to death. The others were force fed to keep them alive. Social isolation had induced behavioural infantilism. He goes so far as to say, “Not only is normal development of age-mate relationships and social behavior vital for adequate affective relationships, but for any adequate personal existence at all.”¹¹¹ Far from triggering the early onset of adulthood, forcing baby monkeys to stand on their own two feet prevented them from properly attaining adulthood at all. At best they were malformed adults.

In the case of monkeys raised in complete solitary confinement, the effects were even more disturbing. At best they had a cloth-covered wire frame for a mother (see accompanying image). “The pitiful, pathological isolates engaged primarily in self-directed behaviors, with a show of self-clasping, self-chewing, and huddling anti-socially in a corner ... Their behavior was so bizarre that the normal young monkeys aggressed them as if they were dangerous strangers.”¹¹² You could say that Harlow was the Dr. Mengele of monkeys.



No less disturbing, Harlow impregnated socially isolated females using methods that were “dark, diverse, and devious.”¹¹³ In the process they created something akin to Dr. Frankenstein's monster, a motherless monkey mother. “These mothers that had never experienced love of any kind were devoid of love for their infants, a lack of feeling unfortunately shared by all too many human counterparts ... Most of the monkey motherless mothers ignored their infants ... but other motherless mothers abused their babies by crushing the infant’s face to the floor, chewing off the infant’s feet and fingers, and in one case by putting the infant’s head in her mouth and crushing it like an eggshell. Not even in our most devious dreams could we have designed a surrogate as evil as these real monkey mothers.”¹¹⁴ That point Montagu made about humans applies to monkeys too, so he could have expressed it more generally as, “The *only* way we *primates* learn to love is by being loved.”

With understandable exasperation the anthropologist Robert Sapolsky has asked, “Why torture baby monkeys to prove the obvious?”¹¹⁵ Harlow's biographer, Deborah Blum replies, “The first answer is that the importance of love and connection wasn't obvious at the time.”¹¹⁶ But it emphatically *was* obvious - to certain unadulterated human beings. Bob Zimmermann, a colleague of Harlow, notes, “My daughter, who

is a nurse, made a good remark when we were talking about the surrogate project. She said that probably every nurse who worked in a preemie unit was nodding their heads when they read about Harry's work, and saying "See, I told you so, cuddling and rocking pays off."¹¹⁷ The daughter and her nursing colleagues took as gospel truth what Harlow and colleagues were still arduously trying to establish. Those who have experienced love do not need a controlled experiment to convince them of its importance.

"Why torture baby monkeys to prove the obvious?"

(Anthropologist Robert Sapolsky)

What Blum meant is that it wasn't obvious to the acclaimed psychological experts of the day. But what she is implying is that to know as Professor Harry Harlow knows is to really know. What is a nurse next to Harlow, nevermind a coddled baby? Even pursuing knowledge about love was very suspect at the time. Zimmermann says, "In all honesty, nobody, no grad student wanted to touch the mother surrogate project with a ten-foot pole. This was Wisconsin, and Harry could be of some help, but you had to get your thesis or dissertation past a committee, and to talk about love at the University of Wisconsin, where everything was numbers and statistics ... I think the first assumption was that if you took that one you'd never graduate."¹¹⁸ There was a great deal of bigotry in intellectual circles against the importance of motherly love at the time. Of all departments you might think psychology would be one in which love would be up there.

Blum is correct that knowing as Harlow knew is to really have knowledge, but only in the sense of 'knowing about.' The baby obviously "knows" she needs her mother, but her cry is a mere anecdote, not a formalised statement in text in a scientific publication. The "knows" is in inverted commas because it is not a high level, conscious knowing, but this does not mean it is not a real and very important kind of knowing. The baby that does not know her need for her mother and does not express it somehow to her mother could very well be overlooked to her detriment. Developmental psychologists Gopnik and colleagues say, "... even newborns already know a great deal about people and objects and language."¹¹⁹ It would be useless, of course, to get a psychological expert to lecture the baby on the importance of motherly love. Evolution has enabled the baby to genuinely know but in a very different way. The notion that knowing about is the only genuine kind of knowing is very prevalent thanks to the arguments and egos of some highly acclaimed

philosophers in history. But, contemporary epistemologists have thoroughly refuted this position as I document elsewhere.¹²⁰

Blum's statement could be taken to imply that real parental love hinges upon knowing about it as Harlow did. The evidence demonstrates the contrary. With his meticulous, impeccable experiments, Harlow may well have come to know about the importance of parental love better than anyone before him. This did nothing to stop him from continuing his sadistic experiments.

Perhaps the problem was more fundamental, more intrinsic to his being. Perhaps Harlow himself was somehow adulterated so that he was incapable of showing love towards those monkeys. Perhaps he failed to develop properly emotionally. He does indicate that he had an emotionally cold mother. Harlow did begin an autobiography, yet it was never published. We will have to look elsewhere for the effect of maternal love, or lack of it, on human children, and we will. Harlow's particular upbringing set him up extremely well for the surrogate project. Another person would have balked at the idea. Now Harlow was being provocative in describing himself as a sadist. Actually, he was indifferent towards the monkeys. The pleasure he got was not from their pain and suffering but the unequivocal scientific results he got from their pain and suffering.

You could say he was very adult as an objective scientist. This does not mean he was fully developed in all respects. He had difficulty saying 'r' right into adulthood, substituting 'w' instead, and was teased mercilessly for it. Although he was a husband and father, his childhood didn't set him up for that either, yet this did not garner nearly as much attention as his scientific success.

If learning *about* love were enough, Harlow should have been the most affectionate of fathers. But, despite the intellectually compelling demonstration of the importance of parental affection from his research, this did not enable him to be affectionate towards his own children. "He "increasingly immersed himself in his work and became silent and uncommunicative" at home. He was up early and gone, home late, off to the lab every day, weekends included.""¹²¹ After his divorce he was left with "psychology as mistress and wife and family."¹²² His son Robert has said, "My brother, who's three years younger, I don't think he has a single memory of Dad from his childhood."¹²³ If monkey babies need a parent so much, why should it be less so for human children?

Child experts at learning from adults

As an exercise it is biologically naive of course, but if you placed rats, preschool children and adult humans along a ladder who would you put on top? Most human adults would place themselves on the top, I suspect. It depends on your criteria, but if you went by number of synapses or connections per neuron in the brain, the children would be on top! Yes, as humans get older this parameter gets closer and closer to

that of rats! Gopnik and colleagues say, “The number of synapses reaches its peak at two to three years of age, when there are about 15,000 synapses per neuron. This is actually many more than in an adult brain. Preschool children have brains that are literally more active, more connected, and much more flexible than ours. From the point of view of neurology, they really are alien geniuses.”¹²⁴ There is a certain “regression” in growing up! Clearly, there is more to growing up than meets the eye. There is a big clue here that there is something very special about human childhood and that children have a proficiency of their own.

It is not that kiddypillars are irrational whereas adults are rational, it is that kiddypillars do rationality differently and they do it well. They do it very *relationally*. They are experts at learning from adults. They are particularly good at knowing persons rather than knowing about things. This makes a lot of sense from an evolutionary perspective. For many millions of years in our evolutionary history the one extremely important constant for a baby is its mother and her milk. Better respond to that one constant optimally. And so, babies have evolved to be cute. Of course, no baby would superciliously remind his neuroscientist mother that in the synapses per neuron department she is closer to a rat than he is. He wouldn't do this because he isn't close to being specialised enough to know about that or so foolhardy. He is too busy using those extra synapses in engaging his mother, being cute and getting fed.

The “regression” could be called “If you don't use it, you prune it.” It has to be this way to avoid sensory overload. The baby is figuring out what is important. Many of these synapses are involved in the many cognitive activities we take for granted such as recalling the faces of people, remembering their voices or recognising the microsignals that indicate not to push his luck with mom.

Philosophers have lately come to stress the importance of personal over impersonal knowledge, but they could have got the corrective from babies. Philosopher John Macmurray, for instance, could lament that “The cultural crisis of the present is indeed a crisis of the personal”¹²⁵ saying, “Modern philosophy is characteristically egocentric. I mean no more than this: that firstly, it takes the Self as its starting-point, and not God, or the world or the community; and that, secondly, the Self is an individual in isolation, an ego or ‘I’, never a ‘thou’. This is shown by the fact that there can arise the question, ‘How does the Self know that other selves exist?’”¹²⁶ Babies do not doubt the existence of others and between the personal and impersonal, babies are proportionally far more preoccupied with the former than many adults. Alison Gopnik and colleagues say, “Babies seem designed to see the people who love them more clearly than anything else.”¹²⁷

“Babies seem designed to see the people who love them more clearly than anything else.”

(Alison Gopnik and colleagues)

Erik Erikson says, “An infant of two or three months will smile at even half a painted dummy face, if that half of the face is fully represented and has at least two clearly defined points or circles for eyes; more the infant does not need, but he will not smile for less. The infant's instinctive smile seems to have exactly that purpose which is its crowning effect, namely, that the adult feels recognized, and in return expresses recognition in the form of loving and providing.”¹²⁸ So don't let his cuteness fool you. Beneath that there is a lot of wily going on. He is responding very adaptively and rationally in his attachment style to his mother's behaviour. If his crying gets a positive response he is more likely to use it next time and pay close attention to his mother. The personal relationship between mother and child is reinforced. The end result is secure attachment (see accompanying image).¹²⁹



If the mother, in contrast, responds indifferently, then he will respond in kind. He has learnt that being emotional does not work. So, under the principle of “if you don't use it you lose it,” he shelves that dimension to his being, withdrawing into himself and securing a lonely existence. This is one of the so-called insecure styles of attachment, namely insecure-avoidant. Psychologist Alice Miller explains, “A child can experience her feelings only when there is somebody there who accepts her fully, understands her, and supports her. If that person is missing, if the child must risk losing the mother's love or her substitute in order to feel, then she will repress emotions. She cannot even experience them secretly, “just for herself”; she will fail to experience them at all.”¹³⁰ The consequences will last throughout adulthood and into the next generation, as we will see. The child has sacrificed full personhood for the sake of survival. While this costs personally, it is quite rational. From an evolutionary perspective, it is better to make it more likely that adulthood in some form is reached than to risk that for the sake of an optimal adulthood. Recall that evolution prioritises survival and reproduction. The child becomes predisposed towards replacing relationality with independent rationality. This is to go backwards towards the condition in apes.

As we can fall into disparaging childhood, so we fall in the opposite direction and disparage adulthood. Both phases need to be embraced with all their particular strengths. Single-mindedness is not invariably a weakness. Parents resolutely loving a child is the best strategy for bringing out the best from the childhood stage. It is here that taking the road less travelled is not a good idea. If it wasn't so, we could save ourselves a great deal of time by just letting children nurture each other. Oh wait, we do that. It's called boarding school. My *Unnatural Intelligence: Crows and the Father expose the Cuckoo*¹³¹ documents the ravages of boarding school on children. There is never a time in parenting for experimenting with withholding love from a child. The results of novelty have been so massively successful in the diversity of our professional lives that we think we can apply it willy-nilly in our parental lives with disastrous consequences for our children, as we will see. A child monitor is a terrible substitute for parental presence as is a child walker for the crawling phase and a crib for a cradle.

With all their expertise in learning from others, are babies still little bigots? The short answer is yes. It turns out from research by Kiley Hamlin and others at the Baby Lab, that while babies are born with the rudiments of a sense of morality and justice, they also have a predilection to favour in-groups over out-groups.¹³² They also favour family members over others. Anthropologist Sarah Hrdy says, “... infants don't have an innate fear of cats — big or small. Snakes, it is true, do have a peculiar salience. All primates fixate on them, take special notice, and once frightened, never forget. Yet typically, infants first must learn to be frightened of snakes by watching other group members react to them. But strange humans (especially adult males) are

another story. No one teaches babies to fear strangers. Their panic derives from a built-in prejudice so deep it persists in spite of every reassurance the parent offers.”¹³³

Before rushing to disparage their condition, what Hrdy termed 'prejudice' she also rushed to defend on evolutionary grounds. It could justifiably also be called an evolutionary-endowed heuristic that is quite sensible for the very vulnerable.

Psychologists Martin Daly and Margo Wilson provide the basis. They report that in Canada between 1974 and 1990 preschoolers were over one hundred *times* more frequently beaten fatally by a step-parent than a genetic parent¹³⁴ and saying, “Having a step-parent has turned out to be the most powerful epidemiological risk factor for severe child maltreatment yet discovered.”¹³⁵

“Having a step-parent has turned out to be the most powerful epidemiological risk factor for severe child maltreatment yet discovered.”

(Psychologists Martin Daly and Margo Wilson)

Returning to bias against out-groups in children, research has shown that under the safety and influence of loving parents and others it diminishes.¹³⁶ This is because children are imitators. A child imitating its parents is being set up for life. In a classic experiment, mentioned elsewhere, a researcher, in front of some children, used a rake with the teeth down to collect sweets. Many of the sweets slipped through. When the children were given the task, they copied the inefficient researcher.

On the surface this might look silly and irrational. Yet, it actually distinguishes us from our close cousins, the chimpanzees. Chimpanzees, in contrast, flipped the rake, performing the task much more efficiently.¹³⁷ They are more inclined to obtain information directly from the environment without consulting others. As epistemologists know, social transmission of knowledge in our species is the norm. Philosopher Neil Levy says baldly, “We are overimitators.”¹³⁸ Instead of “we,” Levy would have more accurately said children.

Adult experts that cannot learn from other adults

As we grow up and become more knowledgeable in our professions, we naturally have less need to defer to others within it. But certain malformed adults take this

inclination to play the adult with all and sundry to the extreme. Such adults are potentially very dangerous. Elsewhere I've mentioned the case of a highly credentialed aerospace engineer who was unable to be childlike in following the lead of those with expertise in the opposite direction - in deep sea engineering.¹³⁹ As a result Stockton Rush took himself and four others to a watery grave.

Now imagine a highly credentialed paediatrician who played the adult among anaesthesiologists, neurologists, psychologists and epidemiologists. The individual was very much for children but could not, like a child, defer to other credentialed adults. In the end it would be very risky for the children. Her job was a critically important one - identify possible cases of child abuse, investigate them and recommend whether a child should become a ward of the state. Her name is Dr. Sally Smith. Very unfortunately for eleven-year-old Maya Kawolski, her path came to cross Smith's.

Maya had been independently diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) by experts in the condition and board-certified anesthesiologists, Dr. Anthony Kirkpatrick and Dr. Pradeep Chopra. This happened after her parents, Jack and Beata, had visited countless doctors. Maya was eventually successfully treated with ketamine. She later relapsed and was brought to John Hopkins All Children's Hospital.

In her anxiety over Maya, Beata, a registered nurse, became “pushy and belligerent” with the hospital staff. While this wasn't wise of Beata, the staff couldn't see past the professional rivalry to the loving mother she was. They suspected she might be a child abuser and contacted Smith. The paediatrician took fifteen minutes to decide in the affirmative, specifically, Munchausen by proxy, in which the abuser visits a fictitious medical condition upon the child. Maya's case was complex, leading medical personnel at the hospital to arrive at different conclusions over her condition. A psychologist, however, evaluated Beata and determined that she did *not* have Munchausen by proxy while the hospital itself continued to bill the parents for treatment for CRPS despite some staff denying that Maya had it.

For Smith, however, it was a clear case of abuse by proxy. Specialists that came to a conclusion different to her own were deemed “unreliable.” There was only one truly reliable expert, herself - she presumed she could read others not just medically, but neurologically, psychologically and otherwise perfectly accurately. Not for her was a professional division of labour. She failed to pass on Kirkpatrick's diagnosis and recommendations to legal authorities.

She also failed to defer to epidemiologists of child abuse. Imagine an American claiming that between getting into a cage with a mountain lion or a dog you should choose the mountain lion because 222 *times* as many people in the US are killed annually by dogs (on average 40¹⁴⁰) than by mountain lions (on average 0.18¹⁴¹). This

person has made the novice's mistake of confusing absolute and relative risk. The absolute risk is so much greater for dogs because there are so many more of them in the US (90 million¹⁴²) than mountain lions (about 30,000¹⁴³). Smith "reasoned" the same way as this novice in saying, concerning child abuse, that "Mom's boyfriend is actually ten times less likely to be the perpetrator than Mom."¹⁴⁴ This was said at one of her many lectures at All Children's Hospital. Recall that Martin Daly and Margo Wilson report the diametric opposite. It is true that most child abusers are biological parents, but that is because there are far more biological parents than step-parents. Let's just say that calling her unreliable in the epidemiology of child abuse is an understatement.

A fellow with a law enforcement background commented that Smith had been unfairly demonised when all she had was some tunnel vision.¹⁴⁵ The implication is that what she needed was more competence. This is emphatically the last thing she needed. Would it not make her even less willing to bow to others? She did not need better paediatric eyes to ascertain whether Beata had a mental illness; she needed someone with a different set of eyes altogether. She was being adultish. She needed to know where her proficiency ended and another's began. This doesn't require more of her professional expertise, but humility and wisdom.

The result was that Maya not only had to endure the trauma of excruciating pain but also being disbelieved by Smith and other staff that had believed Smith. She was imprisoned in the hospital, isolated from her parents and became a ward of the state. A judge even forbade Beata from hugging her child. Beata went home and later committed suicide. On top of all her trauma, Maya lost her mother. To a significant extent, Smith was instrumental in forging a kingdom that was hellish for her subjects. Hers was bigotry in the extreme.

After her mother's death Maya wrote a note saying, "I want to go home. I've been feeling terrible the last few days. I have been getting worse and worse. All I want for Christmas is my family. I cry every day, and it makes me feel sad. I never got to say my goodbyes to my mom. I pray every day that I will be able to go home."¹⁴⁶ She has described her mother as "intelligent and compassionate." It was perhaps this combination of traits that led her to the conclusion under the circumstances that committing suicide would achieve her daughter's freedom. She was right. Soon after her death, Maya was released into the care of her father where she remained. Beata was single-mindedly adult about loving Maya while being like a child in the lateral, counter-intuitive and strategic way she went about expressing it in the end. Her death brought her powerlessness, but paradoxically also most powerfully wrought Maya's freedom from state control and brought Maya into the arms of her father.

“I want to go home. I've been feeling terrible the last few days. I have been getting worse and worse. All I want for Christmas is my family. I cry every day, and it makes me feel sad. I never got to say my goodbyes to my mom. I pray every day that I will be able to go home.”

(Maya Kawolski)

The family sued Smith and the hospital. While it took years, Smith settled out of court for \$2.5 million. The hospital went to court and lost to the tune of \$211 million. But what is that to the loss of a mother and everything else that Maya had to go through? The road to hell is paved not only with good intentions but also with not needing other professionals. Unlike Stockton Rush, since Smith contributed indirectly to a death her case and cases like it may go relatively unnoticed.

At least Smith had a medical background. An architect I know once said to me, “I don't understand depression” implying that if people would just be like him there wouldn't be depression in the world. I asked my psychologist son-in-law for his perspective and he gave the perfect response, “I don't understand architecture.” I'll leave it to epidemiologists of psychology to figure out, but Smith and the architect may not be uncommon. Do not many project an image of being personally on top of everything, whatever the subject? They have no real need for other persons. Smith had a big head. What would happen if a butterfly had this condition? Let's do a thought experiment.

The big-headed butterfly

One day a butterfly lands on a flower to sip nectar. He notices a caterpillar on a leaf nearby munching merrily away. “Poor pitiful creature,” he says to himself, “eating roughage, whereas I feed on sweet, delectable nectar.” He flies down to it and taunts, “Say caterpillar, why don't you learn to fly and feed like a prince instead of grovelling around in the undergrowth?”



The caterpillar looks up and sees the personification of handsome majesty. Before he can even think of a response the magnificent creature has effortlessly flitted away. His heart becomes filled with envy. Presently some of his mates come by and see him looking into the sky with yearning. They urge him to join them in their munching, but he ignores them. He has loftier aspirations. How he wishes that by some magic he could leave the plebian ardour of crawling and take to the sky. A journey that would take him a day takes a butterfly a couple of seconds. “Why was he created a caterpillar when he could have been a butterfly?” he murmurs to himself.

Finally the day arrives when he feels compelled to latch onto a plant and keep perfectly still. This suits him down to the ground since he is rather emaciated and without the energy to get around to eat much. The time comes for him to emerge from the chrysalis. To his great surprise he has turned into a butterfly! His wish has been magically granted. With a triumph worthy of a drum roll he begins stretching out his wings. Oh no! His wings will only stretch out so far and remain almost as shrivelled as they were inside the chrysalis. Insufficient nutrition has kept him from becoming fully transformed. He can only look in dismay as he sees his mates. They have each become transformed themselves and are taking off into the wind. They have left him far behind and all alone. He finally tries to heed their advice and munch on leaves but finds he cannot. Instead of jaws, he has a straw. All he can do after arduously climbing up to a flower is sip nectar. He looks down to see some caterpillars eating leaves. He yearns for a meal as substantial.

The story has a strange title since the big-headed butterfly plays only a small part at the beginning. Yes, but it had a big impact. This is a fairy tale, of course. Even if butterflies were into parental care, none would be clever and foolish enough to experiment with hurrying the caterpillar stage. You need to be human to do that. One has to look in fiction for bigoted butterflies. Among humans, bigots are very much in the realm of non-fiction with very detrimental effects on the development of children, as we will see. The reason is that humans are smart enough to conduct experiments on their children without having enough compassion or wisdom to see how risky this is for them.

Unnatural Experiments in Forming the Adulterated

To find out how to best raise children, controlled experiments would be ideal from a scientific perspective. Keep all the conditions in an experimental group the same as the control except for something considered critical and see what happens. Making it also a double blind randomised study would be even better. Of course, this would be most unethical on children. Another option is the thought experiment. An example cited by the psychologist Darlene Deutsch is the acclaimed *Confessions of Felix Krull* by Thomas Mann.¹⁴⁷ What happens when Krull grows up to be handsome and charming under a father who has a corrupted soul? Though it is a work of fiction, Deutsch finds Mann's foray into the mind of an imposter most perceptive.¹⁴⁸

There is yet another option and that is the natural experiment. Modern history is replete with examples of parents, who, in the matter of raising children, took the road less travelled and that made all the difference, in the negative, for the children. Though outwardly their offspring might look as adult as the next person, inwardly, as we will see, they are less adult and more adulterated. We are talking about varied little natural experiments. I mean 'natural experiments' only in the sense that most were far from being deliberately controlled by seasoned researchers with credentials. We are talking very off the cuff and hit and miss. Very. They are better called *unnatural* experiments.

Now the evolutionary process is rather hit and miss except that it has the benefit of the accumulated experience of millions of generations. Unnatural experimenters go against all this wisdom on the basis of the experience of the few in a fraction of a generation. Unsurprisingly, it typically fails - miserably for the children. With some evolutionary wisdom these unnatural experiments shouldn't even have been necessary. Do we really need to remove a caterpillar from a leaf and toss it up to see how well it will do in the air? Yet somehow, as we will see, even, or perhaps especially, among the cleverest of humans there has been obliviousness to the needs of their children. At least we can try to learn from these failures for the sake of the future generations.

An orthopaedic surgeon once said to me, “There are two kinds of people in the world, those with back pain and those who are going to get it.” In evolutionary terms, we are too recently bipedal, inheriting the condition from our Australopithecine ancestors only several million years ago. Extreme intelligence arose far more recently than that in anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*. Could it come with a good deal of pain too? We now have the wherewithal to go very lateral in raising our children but without necessarily the wisdom to remain completely and single-mindedly upright in our love for them. Biological evolution has slowly taken us only so far. Perhaps we haven't evolved wisdom quickly enough for the capacity that our intelligence gives us in quickly inducing experimental novelty in nurturing. The result is pain and developmental malformation for our children. To borrow from the words of Jesus, we have the shrewdness of serpents without the innocence of doves.

We have seen how a clever child who is treated by his father as a complete dullard eventually turned out. In contrast, how would a prodigy schooled and exhibited by his proud father turn out, for instance? Or, how would a prodigy schooled and paraded as a failure turn out? We saw how a guileless country-bumpkin who is given the means to hobnob with the snobs of high society London turned out. How about a sensitive, compassionate child who is raised by a sociopathic father? In contrast, how about an insensitive child raised by a sociopathic father? How about children raised by a calculatingly emotionless psychologist and his assistant. How about a child who is raised so that he could not understand the language of his parents? Could you guess which of these children would grow up to become a depressed alcoholic, a janitor just scraping by and a recluse in the extreme? Which of these would fall into such despair as to contemplate suicide and which would actually do so?

The Butterfly Effect

The so-called 'Butterfly Effect' was coined in the field of Chaos Theory in the 1960's. The idea is that the beat of a butterfly wing, though inconsequential in itself, could be just the trigger that eventually culminates in a hurricane. Typically the concept is applied to physical systems, but developmental psychologists point out that events that seem relatively insignificant in a childhood could have major consequences.

As developmental psychologist Paul Kaplan avers, “Chaos theory would have us look at small events that may occur at crucial times. A small discussion with a parent, a hug at the right time, or playing chess with a child may have as much or even a greater impact on a child's development than the major events that are often the focus of our research studies. Such minor events in the long run may be very important. Small changes in parenting practices or teaching strategies, especially when children are young, may not show immediate results but may be very significant over the long run.”¹⁴⁹

A small discussion with a parent, a hug at the right time, or playing chess with a child may have as much or even a greater impact on a child's development than the major events that are often the focus of our research studies.

(Developmental psychologist Paul Kaplan)

Before the Butterfly Effect was so named, the mathematician-philosopher Norbert Wiener had the concept down with respect to physical systems, “It only takes a small modification of the impetus of the firing pin of a gun to change a misfire into the effective projection of a bullet; and in case this gun is in the hands of an assassin, this vanishingly small difference may produce the difference between a revolution and a peaceful political development.”¹⁵⁰ Applying the concept to child development and we can see how extremely foolhardy it is to experiment on children. If there ever was a complex system it is the individual human being. While there are, of course, negative feeding back loops in humans leading to homeostasis, surely enough of a perturbation in development can lead to untold consequences. It could lead a compassionately predisposed child to become merely an oddball. Playing around with the development of a child is potentially far worse than playing Russian roulette. It could lead yet another to becoming a tyrant that unleashes massive loss of human life on the world. Let us look at a few cases.

Billy the “man”

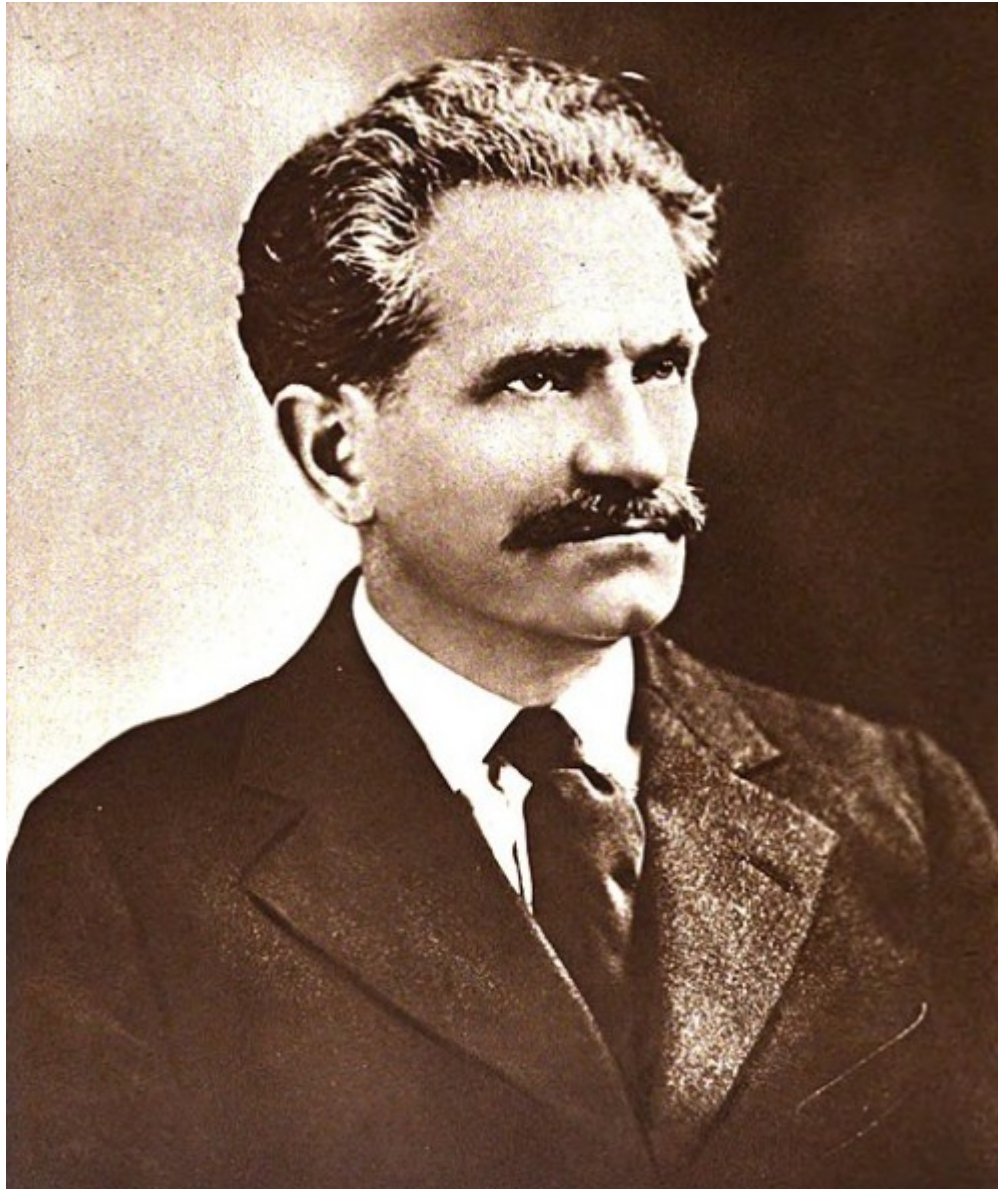
If a child must be experimented upon, why not by parents that are compassionate and credentialed? Billy's seemed to fit the bill. His father was a psychiatrist-psychologist and his mother a physician. Unlike other parents that we will meet later, Billy's were deeply involved in his life and uninterested in pursuing careers to simply make money. Indeed, they had a decided disdain for the stuff, frequently refusing payment from needy patients such as students and particularly ministers, priests and rabbis. While struggling to make ends meet, Billy's mother, Sarah, bought toys for her son rather than the winter overcoat she so desperately needed. Their philosophy of child development is summed up in the words of Billy's father, Boris, “You know the old saying—““As the twig is bent the tree's inclined.” Parents cannot too soon begin the work of bending the minds of their children in the right direction, of training them so that they shall grow up complete, efficient, really rational men and women.”¹⁵¹ Sarah added, “We decided from the start that we would treat Billy just like a grown-up.”¹⁵² Leo and Sarah were adultist.

For many “Nature” would seem to have handed Billy the best chance of developing very soundly indeed. Have we not here something even better than a natural experiment? Have his parents not set him up on a trajectory to go very far in life? Billy was reading the *New York Times* at just 18 months. He completed primary school in half a year. He was fluent in six languages at ten years old. Majoring in mathematics, he graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard University at the age of fifteen.¹⁵³ Here is what he was able to write at eleven years old, “It is possible to construct figures of the Fourth Dimension with a hundred and twenty sides called hecatonicosihedrigons, or figures with six hundred sides called hexacosihedrigons. I attach great value in the working out of my theories to the help given by polyhedral angles of the dodesecahedron which enter into many of the problems. Some of the things that I have found out about the Fourth Dimension will aid in the solution of many of the problems of elliptical geometry.”¹⁵⁴ How is this for a gifted child?

Billy went quickly, but not far. He declined the professorship he was offered, became a clerk, isolated and destitute. He died at 46 years old. His full name is William James Sidis (see accompanying image)



What went awry? The psychologist David Cohen has reviewed the outcome of children raised by psychologists and it does not always end well for them or the extended family. For instance, “Two of Freud’s nieces committed suicide, as did one of their husbands. Freud had had one niece, Cacilie, committed to an asylum some months before her death. Freud’s cousin and brother-in-law Moritz also killed himself.”¹⁵⁵ His string of cases included the likes of such notables as Sigmund Freud, John B. Watson, Carl Jung, Melanie Klein and R.D. Laing. Strangely, he did not include the case of Billy’s father, Boris Sidis who was, recall, both a psychologist and a psychiatrist (see accompanying image).



Billy's biographer, Amy Wallace, pronounced in her epilogue, "Though the mythmakers have held Boris and Sarah's child-rearing methods at fault, there is in fact nothing to fault in them."¹⁵⁶ The trouble here is that Wallace was neither a developmental psychologist nor ever a parent and she begins her epilogue favourably quoting Ayn Rand who was never a parent either, to the effect that the genius who fails to perform is protesting unreason. Let us hear from a psychologist and mother instead. Ellen Winner says that Billy "... bitterly resented his father, who had driven him, lived through him, and starved him emotionally." Winner categorises Boris as a "creator parent." She says, "Children of creator parents typically submerge their own personality and become what the parents want them to become. At some level these children probably feel that their parents' love is conditional on their success." Billy's parents were deeply involved as educators of him as a professional *at the expense* of being nurturers of him as a person. Winner stresses, "What leads some gifted children

to disengage from talent is never high expectations, but rather extreme pushing, domination, exploitation, and emotional deprivation.”¹⁵⁷

William Blake had a very different take to the bent twig approach of Boris Sidis. Blake wrote,

“He who bends to himself a Joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
Who kisses the Joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity’s sunrise.”¹⁵⁸

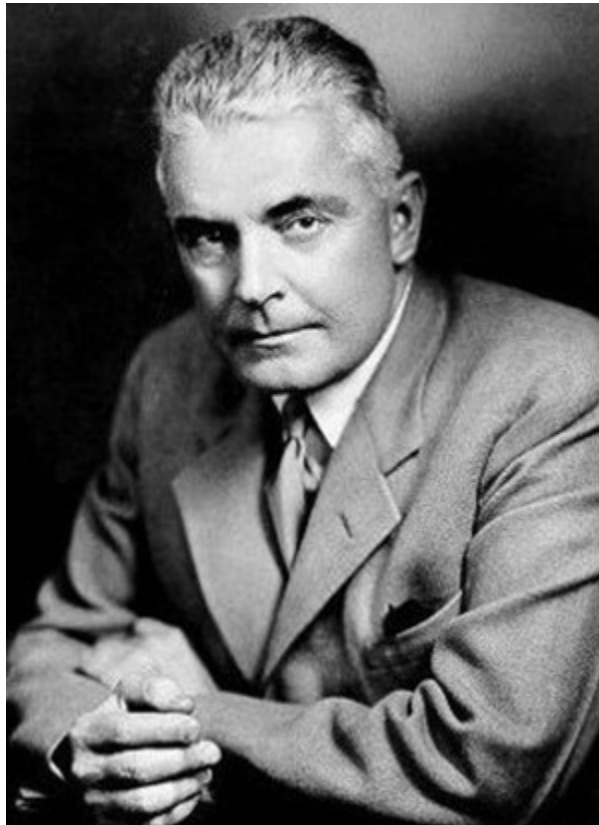
In short, Billy, before he had much of a chance to be a boy, his mommy's and daddy's little boy, became a “man,” an adulterated man. The kiddypillar stage happened far too quickly for him. As a result the promise of him really flying did not materialise. Even after his death there is pressure on Billy. It has been argued, and I kid you not, that Billy bombed out because he wasn't genuinely gifted. How about asking about whether his *parents* were genuinely gifted in the sense of giving their loving presence to their children without any agenda?

In case it is thought that Billy is exceptional in bombing out, Winner goes on to say, “Out of more than seventy musical prodigies who blossomed in San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s, only six (including Yehudi Menuhin and Leon Fleischer) went on to become well-known soloists.” p. 278. She adds, “We are more likely to hear about the Picassos, Midoris, and Yo-Yo Mas of the world than about the Eitans [a drawing prodigy who lost interest in art as an adult] and the Sidises. ... The myth that prodigies have brilliant futures is strengthened by the fact that many eminent and creative people throughout history showed exceptional abilities as children. We forget that this does not imply the reverse — that exceptional children become adult creators.”¹⁵⁹

Even those prodigies that become eminent adult creators do so at a terrible cost. Winner avers, “Creators are hard-driving, focused, dominant, independent risk takers. They have experienced stressful childhoods, and they often suffer from forms of psychopathology ... The kind of intense, focused drive that creators show has its personal costs. Creators must be willing to sacrifice comfort, relaxation, and personal relationships for the sake of their work. They are often ruthless and destructive of personal ties.”¹⁶⁰ For the sake of the children perhaps it was for the best that Billy happened to have had no siblings. From the perspective of hard scientific research, it would have been interesting to compare how those siblings would have turned out. How about four children born to a psychologist?

The protoplasms of the father of behaviourism

Well we have that in the case of John B. Watson (see accompanying image¹⁶¹). Unfortunately for his children, they arrived on the scene too early to benefit from the lessons from Harry Harlow's monkey experiments. Watson had two children with his first wife Mary Ickes. The mother was granted custody after their parent's divorce. Watson had another two children with his second wife Rosalie Rayner, a former student of his.



As the father of behaviourism, Watson's philosophy was that, as scientists, psychologists should ignore the unobservable internal states of their subjects and only follow behaviour. While he conducted a great deal of research on rats, he failed to notice that they are attuned to each other's emotional states. Then again, since he was not closely related to them, perhaps he was not particularly invested. What about children? Anthropologist Ashley Montagu points out that for Watson, "What could not be observed - the child's wishes, needs, and feelings - was excluded from the behaviorist's interest and was therefore treated as if it did not exist." He regarded consciousness as no "more a scientific concept than soul."¹⁶²

"The behaviorists insisted on treating children as if they were mechanical objects that could be wound up any which way one pleased; children were at the mercy of their environment, and parents could by their own behavior make them into anything they desired. Sentimentality was to be avoided, because any show of love or close physical contact made the child too dependent upon its parents. What one should aim for,

urged the behaviorists, was the encouragement of independence, self-reliance, and the avoidance of any dependence upon the affections of others. One must not spoil children with affection.”¹⁶³

His philosophy on child development was clear. Not for him was a protracted childhood stage. He believed that it is “because it prolongs the period of infancy” that the family had failed. In short, Watson wanted a caterpillar to get on with it and fly. “There is a sensible way of treating children,” he wrote, “Treat them as though they were young adults. Let your behavior always be objective and kindly firm.”¹⁶⁴ What about maternal affection? “Never hug and kiss them, never let them sit on your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning.”¹⁶⁵ Watson promoted the professionalisation of parenting.

How is the average mother with her warm impulses going to stand up to a credentialed psychologist from a prestigious university? One criterion is common sense. Watson wrote against maternal affection when his firstborn of four children was just thirteen years old. He might have waited to see how his children turned out before making such sweeping pronouncements. Affectionate mothers have been successfully raising children for a very long time. And fathers. The loving father rushing out to hug his wayward son, in the so-called parable of the prodigal son, would not have made much of an impression on Watson since, as his biographer points out, “He only uttered the name of the Lord when swearing.”¹⁶⁶ (In this parable, which is better called the story of the loving father, Jesus takes for granted that fathers are loving to make a point about God the Father). Watson is very much the new kid on the block and psychology at the time was still in its infancy.

There is another criterion. As epistemologists point out, even if Watson had a particular knowledge of one kind, he can still be very ignorant in another. A six-year-old by the name of Emily responded to the question, “What makes someone a good Mom?” with “They give you hugs and kisses.” Six-year-old Avery answered, “A good mommy spends a lot of time with her kids.”¹⁶⁷ How can these little children stand up to Big John, the psychologist? They can! While psychology was just getting going in *knowing about* children, *knowing* persons was commonplace. If Watson did not personally know a loving mother, this does not mean that others didn't.

What did make an impression on Watson was Ivan Pavlov's conditioning experiments. Pavlov found that dogs would learn to respond positively to a stimulus, a ringing bell, if it was consistently associated with a reward. Watson successfully conditioned rats and believed that it could be applied to children. In a notoriously unethical experiment, he introduced a white rat to a nine-month-old baby, known as Little Albert. The baby was curious. Watson got Little Albert to be terrified of the rat by sounding a loud gong whenever he saw it. Eventually Little Albert's fear became generalised to other furry creatures such as rabbits (see accompanying image). At least Pavlov rewarded his subjects.

Watson more or less practised what he preached according to his granddaughter Marietta Hartley (see accompanying image). In her biography she writes that her mother, Mary, dubbed “Polly” by her grandfather, had an upbringing that “was purely intellectual. The only time my mother was “kissed on the forehead” was when she was about twelve and Big John went to war. Although she was reading the newspaper by the time she was two, there was never any touching, not any at all.”¹⁶⁸ His youngest son, Jimmy, claimed that he had never kissed him.¹⁶⁹ Even before he had developed his philosophy, neither Watson nor his first wife, Mary, were much into hugging.¹⁷⁰ Later, Watson got his children into practising his philosophy. Billy and Jimmy were required to go no further then shake each other's hands before going to bed.¹⁷¹



Watson’s biographer, Kerry Buckley, says, “The distance that Watson put between himself and his children was never more apparent than when his wife, Rosalie, died suddenly from pneumonia in 1935. The night their mother died, the children were sent away to camp and brought home the following morning. Watson’s youngest son recalled that he and his brother learned of their mother’s death from the cook.”¹⁷²

And the impact on his children from Jimmy's perspective? "He had a nice sense of humor. He was bright; he was charming; he was masculine, witty, and reflective. But he was also conversely unresponsive, emotionally uncommunicative, unable to express and cope with any feelings of emotion of his own, and determined unwittingly to deprive, I think, my brother and me of any kind of emotional foundation. He deeply believed that any expression of tenderness or affection would have a harmful effect on us. He was very rigid in carrying out his fundamental philosophies as a behaviorist. We were never kissed as children; we were never shown any kind of emotional closeness. It was absolutely verboten in the family. When I went to bed at night, I recall shaking hands with my parents or with any other guest who happened to be in the house. I never tried (nor did my brother Billy) to ever get close to our parents physically because we both knew it was taboo."¹⁷³

And how did his children eventually turn out? John became an alcoholic. As for Polly, she "attempted suicide over and over and over and over"¹⁷⁴ according to her daughter Marietta. Despite Polly's intellectual upbringing, Marietta says she "barely completed ninth grade. Coming from a background steeped in academia, she harbored this fact like a shameful secret throughout her years; she even kept it from me. She had lost interest in school. She had lost interest in friends. For Mom, 1920 was the turning point. I think she lost interest in life."¹⁷⁵ That was the year her father, John B. Watson, divorced her mother. Jimmy also had his emotional crises and attempted suicide.¹⁷⁶ As for Billy, the intellectual conditioning worked. He became a successful psychiatrist and then ... did commit suicide at the age of 34.

Jimmy adds, "Although this may be seen as a rationalization for what happened to me and my brother, I honestly believe the principles for which Dad stood as a behaviorist eroded both Bill's and my ability to deal effectively with human emotion—either to accept it or to show it—and it tended to undermine self-esteem in later life, ultimately contributing to Bill's death and to my own crisis. Tragically, that's the antithesis of what Dad expected from practicing these philosophies."¹⁷⁷ Marietta Hartley's sentiments concur. In describing her relationship with her mother she says. "We couldn't talk about feelings, we couldn't talk about affection, we couldn't talk about touching, but we could talk about sex. Big John's influence was keenly felt. (Years later, when I was crossing a congested boulevard in Los Angeles, I took Mom's hand, but she pulled it away. "Don't. People will think we're lesbians)."¹⁷⁸ Big John's disregard for his children created a bigot who then disregarded her own child. We have a vicious circle or negative feedback loop.

“Although this may be seen as a rationalization for what happened to me and my brother, I honestly believe the principles for which Dad stood as a behaviorist eroded both Bill's and my ability to deal effectively with human emotion—either to accept it or to show it—and it tended to undermine self-esteem in later life, ultimately contributing to Bill's death and to my own crisis. Tragically, that's the antithesis of what Dad expected from practicing these philosophies.”

**(James B. Watson, son of
John B. Watson)**

After Polly admitted to her daughter Marietta that she had her placed in a nursing home for an entire month at the age of just two months for mere whooping cough, Marietta comments, “If I hadn't believed in the power of the subconscious before, I believed it then. How the past bleeds into the present, infecting it. Big John often maintained that the absence of mothers had no adverse effect at all on small children, only positive ones. And once more. Mom believed him.”¹⁷⁹

A lawyer representing John B. Watson posthumously could no doubt come up with counters to Jimmy's and Marietta's testimony saying, “Neither is an expert in psychology. How does Jimmy know that it wasn't his mother who played the negative role in their childhoods or Marietta that it wasn't her grandmother? After all Rosalie was not entirely consistent in complying with her professor-husband procedures on their children. While Rosalie had tried to follow Watson's precepts in the home as a dutiful research assistant, she wasn't altogether consistent, “kissing her two little pieces of protoplasm.” Cohen adds, Perhaps, Watson forbid, Rosalie's early motherly coddling disrupted the experiment. Furthermore, the celebrated John B. Watson did say that most mothers begin “to destroy the child the moment it is born”¹⁸⁰ and “Mother love is a dangerous instrument.”¹⁸¹ And how do Jimmy and Marietta know that a mutant gene didn't sneak in to play the dominant negative role, from the mother's side, of course.”

The lawyer does have a point. The relatives of Watson are certainly free to give their personal impressions, but their touted psychological dynamics need some support from experts. We need psychobiographies by psychologists, but there is only one and Cohen relegated only a small chapter to John B. Watson perhaps reflecting his assessment of his stature. Cohen does mention of Rosalie kissing her children, that “The protoplasms loved it, of course.”¹⁸²

The philosopher Bertrand Russell, living across the Atlantic and no psychologist himself, had a very positive impression of Watson because as he expressed it, “he has studied the behavior of infants not as parents study it, but as a man of science studies the behavior of amoeba.”¹⁸³ Inspired by Watson’s behaviourism and his experiments on Little Albert, Russell tried to instil courage in his toddler son John. His daughter Katharine Tait writes, “Although my father never went so far as to experiment on us in this way, it was with the same dispassionate scientific attitude that he set out to observe John’s childish anxieties.”¹⁸⁴ Perhaps Russell should have stuck to philosophy.

Watson was not content with just his own children as experimental subjects. His vision was national and more. His ideal was for a whole new social order: the family eliminated along with the “evils” of motherly coddling and replaced by psychological engineers.¹⁸⁵ It can’t be for nothing that Kerry Buckley’s biography is entitled *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism*. A child’s personal needs meant little to Watson. What was all-important was society’s professional and commercial needs.

Watson certainly preached his ideals. While his fellow psychologists came to regard him very circumspectly, as we will see, he marketed himself to the public very successfully on the radio and in many magazines as the go to expert on raising children. Buckley notes, “Watson spread the behaviorist faith with a zeal matched by few of his contemporaries. A sensation-hungry press competing for a share of the mass-circulation market happily offered a forum for Watson’s opinions. His name became a familiar by-line in such magazines as *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, as well as in *McCall’s* and *Liberty*.”¹⁸⁶ He became the first pop psychologist according to his granddaughter, Marietta.¹⁸⁷

There are salutary lessons in the John B. Watson psychological affair. For the *lay public* there are other crucial criteria in evaluating Watson and they do not include his faithfulness to the psychological evidence. That criterion is best left to professional psychologists. What we can do is evaluate his credentials and character, both moral and emotional. Concerning the former, a PhD in psychology is certainly a good start, but other questions must be asked. How well was he received by his peers in psychology and related disciplines? Does he represent the consensus of expert opinion? On these counts he does not fare well even for his day. For example, the

American psychologist Joseph Jastrow, famous for the duck-rabbit illusion, did not mince his words, “The vast majority of behaviorists decline to subscribe to the suicidal curtailment of their science which Watson advocates. Watsonism of the later period has not made its way by scientific endorsement but by popular appeal. The editors of popular magazines are the sponsors of this “Behaviorism.””¹⁸⁸

The trouble was that Watson *did* have success convincing a sizable group of his colleagues, although it was fleeting. Psychologist Morton Hunt says, “No one did more to sell behaviorism to American psychologists than Professor John B. Watson of Johns Hopkins University. A gifted huckster, he energetically and skillfully peddled himself and his ideas to his colleagues, rose swiftly to the top of his profession while launching the behaviorist movement ...”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, anthropologist Ashley Montagu wrote of Watson's behaviourism, “This unsentimental, mechanistic approach to childrearing greatly influenced psychology for a time and exercised a profound effect upon pediatric thinking and practice.”¹⁹⁰

Now, if many of his peers and paediatricians were taken in for a while, how is the average parent supposed to avoid getting taken in at the time? The illiterate hill-billy might be better off. Well, while evaluating his behaviourism is best left to psychologists, anyone can scrutinise his behaviour. While he wasn't a particularly good behaviourist even according to behaviourists, he had particularly bad behaviour according to anyone with moral and emotional sense, including psychologists. For instance, Morton Hunt in his *The Story of Psychology* avers, “Like the fictional traveling salesman, Watson exuded self-assurance, stated his views flamboyantly and with certainty, and was a lifelong womanizer. Behind the facade, however, he was insecure, afraid of the dark, and emotionally frozen.”¹⁹¹

“Like the fictional traveling salesman, Watson exuded self-assurance, stated his views flamboyantly and with certainty, and was a lifelong womanizer. Behind the facade, however, he was insecure, afraid of the dark, and emotionally frozen.”

(Psychologist Morton Hunt)

Do you need to be Sigmund Freud to see that Watson was mechanically and sexually driven and had difficulty containing himself but no difficulty projecting his own issues onto others? The biographer of *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* was not a psychologist. Watson's granddaughter, Marietta, could write, “In Big John's ideal world, children were to be taken from

mothers during their third or fourth week; if not, attachments were bound to develop. He claimed that the reason mothers indulged in baby-loving was sexual.”¹⁹²

One of Watson's favourite pastimes was assaulting African-Americans. While some might be inclined to overlook this as the transgressions of his youth, his unethical and unempathetic experiments on nine-month-old Little Albert were done while he was a 42-year-old associate professor. Before that his own children were guinea pigs. Hartley notes, “For years, he had been using Mom and Little John for his experiments and quotes him, “A baby is more fun to the square inch than all the rats and frogs in creation.”¹⁹³ There is a great irony in his bemoaning the prolonging of childhood when in his recreational experiments on children he was behaving so very childishly.

Marietta called her grandfather “Big John,” but you get the sense that she would have preferred “Big Bad John.” She says, “Ironically, while Grandfather was controlling the emotions of a nine-month-old, his were getting out of hand. This time the external stimulus was his young graduate-student assistant from Vassar. He should have hit that gong. He should have been hit with that gong.”¹⁹⁴

A gong did hit him. After his romantic affair with Rosalie, who was more than twenty years younger, John Hopkins University forced him to resign. His academic career was over. Their decision was certainly good for the rise of pop psychology and very bad for the general public. Peer review within the academic community would have provided the better chance of him getting kept accountable. Instead he became a very successful businessman in advertising for the J. Walter Thompson Company, using his psychological proficiency for marketing commodities during the day and penning his psychological ideas for eager magazines at night.¹⁹⁵ He peddled himself not only as a masterful psychologist, but also as a model parent.

But if Watson can experiment with such abandon on little humans in close proximity to himself, why should we trust him on the public at large? It should have dawned on the media, unless they were otherwise invested, that they were the instruments of a provocateur in a giant experiment motivated by curiosity over any vestige of compassion. He took advantage of anxious mothers desperately trying to leave sentimental old wives tales behind to keep up with cold, hard science. Ashley Montagu laments the dismal legacy of Watson's behaviourism , “Unsound as this kind of thinking is, and damaging as it has been to millions of children, many of whom later grew up into disturbed persons, the behavioristic, mechanistic approach to childrearing is still largely with us.”¹⁹⁶

Now writing for the public is perfectly noble in itself, but moral responsibility would have guided him to propagate only the consensus of academic opinion. Intellectually he was very much the lone cowboy. You get the sense that little guided Watson apart from his own ego. There is a big red flag to this effect right at the beginning of his very popular *Psychological Care of the Infant and Child*. The book is, and I kid you

not, “Dedicated to the first mother who brings up a happy child.”¹⁹⁷ What vantage point does this man have that he can give such a presumptuous indictment to every mother in history across the globe? Yet he can say this while oblivious to the miserable condition emerging in his own children! In ignoring their emotional well-being he effectively placed them closer to amoebae than to apes. Does one really need to be a psychologist to see that what is going on here is expertise in the service of ego and brains in the service of bigotry? What we have here is an emotionally adulterated man who is well-developed in emotional exploitation. As a father he was very much less than an adult. A six-year-old girl would have been more affectionate. His children may well have been better off with a wire-frame father with their mother left to do her cuddling thing and the rest of the parenting.

The genius affected by the butterfly effect

The one who said, “It only takes a small modification of the impetus of the firing pin of a gun to change a misfire into the effective projection of a bullet; and in case this gun is in the hands of an assassin, this vanishingly small difference may produce the difference between a revolution and a peaceful political development”¹⁹⁸ was himself deeply affected by the butterfly effect. The very conditions that fostered his formidable genius, as we will see, also lead to traumatic dysfunction in his psyche that would plague him throughout his life. His name is Norbert Wiener (see accompanying image).



As in the case of William James Sidis, Norbert was placed on a strict educational program. His father, Leo, a professor of Slavic languages could speak forty languages, and was determined to make his son into an intellectual success. Biographers Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman say, “He inculcated the classics, mathematics, and every other subject with military precision and a drill sergeant’s demeanor.”¹⁹⁹ Norbert did become a success, not only while still a child prodigy, but unlike Sidis, right through his academic adult life.

Billy Sidis, you will recall, could read at 18 months. Norbert took longer, only reaching this milestone at three years of age. He then took off, reading Charles Darwin at six years old, finishing High School at nine, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics at just fourteen, a Masters degree and a PhD in philosophy from Harvard at just eighteen. Along the way he picked up ten languages. He then settled into that for which he would become preeminent - a professorship in mathematics at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, becoming the founder of Cybernetics and the father of the Information Age. He also became a husband to Margaret Engemann and father to two children, Barbara and Margaret or “Peggy” as she was called.

As a child prodigy Norbert illustrates the significance of the kiddypillar stage, both grandly and grimly. Although his father vehemently denied that he was a genius, upon his particular giftedness and particular education stood a large part of exciting new fields between mathematics, science and philosophy. His father, then, must have done everything right. Not so fast.

Leo's lofty educational approach to children, whatever their cleverness, came with a decided disregard for their developmental status. He writes that children "should be encouraged to use their minds to think for themselves, to come as close as they can to the intellectual level of their parents ... When in the presence of their children ... [parents] should use only the best English, must discuss subjects of real moment and in a coherent, logical way; must make the children feel that they consider them capable of appreciating all that is said."²⁰⁰ To put it differently, if you want your caterpillars to excel at flying, treat them as if they are butterflies already. Leo was adultist.

In practice, as effective as Norbert's educational regimen was, it was often also nothing less than terrifyingly traumatic. As Norbert recounts of his father's tutoring, "He would begin the discussion in an easy, conversational tone. This lasted exactly until I made the first mathematical mistake. Then the gentle and loving father was replaced by the avenger of the blood ... The very tone of my father's voice was calculated to bring me to a high pitch of emotion, and when this was combined with irony and sarcasm, it became a knout with many lashes." The climax? "Father was raging, I was weeping and my mother did her best to defend me, although hers was a losing battle ... There were times for many years when I was afraid that the unity of the family might not be able to stand these stresses, and it is just in this unity that all of a child's security lies."²⁰¹ Leo did not stop at intellectual ineptitude. Of his "very marked physical clumsiness," Norbert writes in his second autobiography, "This clumsiness was serious enough on its own merits, but it was further brought out by the way in which my father harped on it and used to humiliate me concerning it."²⁰² It was not that Leo was unemotional. Norbert says, "He was given to overriding the wills of those about him by the sheer intensity of his emotion rather than by any particular desire to master other people."²⁰³ Norbert may well have been emotionally better off with an unrelated, cold drill sergeant as an instructor.

As dreadful as all this was for Norbert, worse was to come. Unlike Boris Sidis, Leo did not parade his son's successes. Instead, he paraded his failures, "But much more serious for me were the secondary consequences of my father's discipline. I used to hear my juvenile ineptitudes repeated at the dinner table and before company until I was morally raw all over." Leo even went to the press, "Norbert could have been ready for Harvard at 8. He was not forced. He is even lazy."²⁰⁴ Leo once "... shook him by the shoulders and told him if he ever amounted to anything, the credit belonged to the father ..."²⁰⁵ It is evident that the success of the whiz teacher was the

priority over the well-being of the whiz kid. Surely Norbert read this as his acceptance hanging on his performance.

The long lasting impact of father on son was apparent during Norbert's writing of *Ex-prodigy*, initially entitled, *The Bent Twig* echoing the proclamations of Boris Sidis. He is 57 years old and having lunch with Morris Chafetz, his psychiatrist. Chafetz recounts, “Here I am sitting at the feet of this great man, and do you know what that whole lunch consisted of? His crying—actual crying. He was crying because I was a psychiatrist and he wanted to sit at my feet while he was working out the emotions of his relationship with his father in the book.”²⁰⁶

“Here I am sitting at the feet of this great man, and do you know what that whole lunch consisted of? His crying—actual crying. He was crying because I was a psychiatrist and he wanted to sit at my feet while he was working out the emotions of his relationship with his father in the book.”

**(Psychiatrist Morris Chafetz
57 year-old on Norbert Wiener)**

Just to compound Norbert's challenges, he only discovered that he had Jewish origins at fifteen years old. Both Leo and Bertha never let on. At about the age he should have clinched his distinct personal identity, Norbert was in a state of turmoil about himself. He recounts how he reacted to his identity crisis, “... I alternated between a period of cowardly self-abasement and a phase of cowardly assertion, in which I was even more anti-Semitic than my mother”²⁰⁷ (even though she was Jewish herself). To even further add to his challenges, his parents later insisted that he marry a woman who would later herself become a Nazi supporter and anti-Semite.

The “ways und means” of Leo's tutoring must have given far more than a tiny impetus to little Norbert's intellectual trajectory, but what sort of impact did it have on his developing psyche? How would he eventually turn out emotionally? This is where we see the butterfly effect having its full sway. Those fixated on Norbert's success might, in peering around his academic world, see only his astounding intellectual abilities (he could solve simultaneous equations using both his hands ambidextrously down each side of the blackboard)²⁰⁸ and his astounding achievements. Biographers Flo Conway

and Jim Sigelman sum it up, “His footprints are everywhere today, etched in silicon, wandering in cyberspace, and in every corner of daily life”²⁰⁹

To complement his “world-class genius” also noticeable were the charming antics of the proverbial and comically quaint absent-minded professor with his duck-like shape and gait. These could fill a book in themselves. Norbert introduced himself to the statistician Dr. Abraham Matthai at a garden party at the Statistical Institute in Calcutta. When the statistician responded in kind, Norbert replied, “Matthai, that's the name Matthew in Malayalam.” It was a cordial and not particularly noteworthy exchange, except that this was the third time that he had introduced himself to the statistician and the third time the statistician had learnt about “Matthew.”²¹⁰

He has been known to walk into the wrong classroom to give perplexed students a most energetic lecture.²¹¹ He often arrived at his lectures late due to chatting with someone on the way and losing track of time. After taking the car and driving off to Brown University to give a lecture, he caught a train back to his hometown. He then phoned to ask his wife to pick him up at the station.²¹² On one occasion he stopped to chat to a physics student. As he was about to leave he asked from whence he had come. At the student's answer he responded, “Thanks, that means I’ve already had my lunch.”²¹³ Bad weather did not deter him. On one occasion he arrived at the MIT campus to find himself the only one there. It had been closed on account of a brutal blizzard through which he had just doggedly walked for seven miles! He makes me think of our Golden Retriever. She nudges me at walkies time however inclement the weather, but then she has the fur coat to handle it.

A classic example happened on “the day that the Wiener family was moving to a new house. At breakfast, Wiener's wife made a grand ceremony of taking his old house key and putting the new house key on his key ring. She wrote the new address (still within walking distance of the university) on a slip of paper and carefully instructed Norbert that today he was to go home to the new abode. All to no avail. Because Norbert, in the middle of the day, used the slip of paper to answer a math query for someone. So he no longer had the address of his new home. At the end of the day, a creature of habit, he moseyed back to his usual home, only to find nobody there. Worse, his key would not fit in the lock. Looking in the window, he could see that all his possessions were missing. Going into a panic, Wiener proceeded to wring his hands and run around in the yard.”²¹⁴

Wiener also had a soft, kind side. He gave a student a manuscript, asking him to edit it. The student filled a gap he discovered in the proof. Wiener took on the role of secretary, typing up the proof under the student's name and sending it off for publication. His ordeals under the tutoring of his father (and Bertrand Russell by the way) left him sensitive to the impact of negative reinforcement on others. Accordingly, he only ever gave out As to his students.²¹⁵ He was deeply concerned

about the future of the human race, vigorously warning in his writings about the dangers of automation on both our psyche and society.²¹⁶

But at home, “the lovable quirk” as he has been called, was susceptible to emotional hurricanes.²¹⁷ His daughter Barbara recalled his “tantrums” or “emotional storms” that would leave her sister, Peggy, so “terrified” that she would be “physically sick.” They came in waves “... you never knew when a storm would come,” said Barbara. “When he was up he was really creative. When he finished a big project he was vulnerable and more prone to sudden outbursts. When the storms came close together, I knew he was heading for a crash and another prolonged period of depression.”²¹⁸

The butterfly effect is seen not only in his development from child to adult, but in microcosm from emotional state to emotional state. His biographers write, “... often Wiener’s storms were too capricious to forecast, erupting into chaos from harmless flutterings in the breeze.”²¹⁹ Something as innocuous as mentioning a poem could be the trigger. “He would start to recite some poem and then he would start ranting and then he would start crying and he would be in a total state. He was unable to control his emotions.”²²⁰ Norbert would come to dedicate one of his books to his father, “My closest mentor and dearest antagonist.”²²¹

Barbara's recollections match those of his colleague and former student, Professor Norman Levinson, “Wiener was capable of childlike egocentric immaturity on the one hand and extreme idealism and generosity on the other. Similarly his mood could shift quickly from a state of euphoria to the depths of dark despair.”²²² Barbara continues, “He would be tearing his hair. Then he would pack his suitcase and say he was going to go to a hotel and he had packed a gun and he was going to shoot himself because he was “no good to anybody.”²²³

It is clear that for the biographer Heims, the issue was emotional, “Norbert’s education under his father, with all its obsession and intensity, love and loneliness, disregard of convention, insistence on knowledge and learning, tyranny and expectation made for a Faustian man, a man with a Nobel Prize complex, a truth seeker, a grandiose person, a lonely man passionately using intellect to deal with ultimate problems. But at age nine, as all through his life, his intellectual sophistication and maturity far outstripped his social and emotional development.”²²⁴

Barbara said, “My father always required vast amounts of praise and reassurance, but he required even more when he was in one of his tailspins.” (p. 95). Her account dovetails with that of the mathematician Steven G. Krantz, “Norbert Wiener was a great mathematician, but he was plagued by self-doubt. He would question the janitors at MIT as to whether he was really the great mathematician that he was reputed to be. He would frequently go to the Chairman of the MIT Math Department and threaten to resign. Only after the Chairman (who in some instances was either Norman Levinson or William Ted Martin) offered his heartfelt reassurances of

Wiener's enduring mathematical powers did the great man agree to stay on."²²⁵ Likewise his colleague, Jerome Wiesner, recalls Wiener's "daily visits around the Institute from office to office and his conversation that always began with 'How's it going?' He never waited for the answer before sailing into his latest idea."²²⁶

Similarly, Norman Levinson says, "His usual words of greeting became, "Tell me, am I slipping?" Whether one knew what he had been doing or not the only response anyone ever made was a strong denial. However this was usually not enough and it was necessary to affirm in the strongest terms the great excellence of whatever piece of his research he himself would proceed to describe sometimes in the most glowing terms. Altogether such an encounter was an exhausting experience."²²⁷ Some MIT researchers, "contrived to place a man where he could see Wiener coming. He would alert the others, who would then scatter in all directions, even hiding in the men's room. In the MIT idiom of the 1950s this arrangement was known as the Wiener Early Warning System."²²⁸

In accounts of him playing bridge with colleagues, each time he laid down a card he would ask, "Did I do the right thing? Was that the best possible play? Am I a good bridge player?" And, each time, Norman Levinson would patiently assure Wiener that nobody could have done any better."²²⁹ More generally, Taffy, the daughter of Wiener's colleague, neuroscientist Warren McCulloch, said of him, "Wiener was a fascinating man, but he was such a child. Everybody took care of him."²³⁰ This is consistent with what the philosopher G. de Santayana says of him, , "In his reactions he was a child, In his judgments a philosopher ... all traces of immaturity and eccentricity vanished when he picked up his scholarly pen."²³¹

Norbert recounts in his *Ex-prodigy*, that when his sister Bertha was born, in his childish imagination he thought that she magically appeared through an incantation over a medicine bottle and notes the incongruity between his naiveté and his scientific sophistication. Is it any less naive to think that a child can emerge emotionally developed without the necessity of natural nurturing?

Behind the enigma that is Norbert and all the complexities of genius and the human personal condition is there not a discernible thread? Was he not, intellectually, flying far higher than the average butterfly, while emotionally crawling like a caterpillar, still the child desperately seeking assurance of the unconditional love that had not come from his father? While Conway and Siegelman say that the "dark hero" is, "Like dark matter whose presence can only be inferred from its effects on the universe around it, his science and ideas continue to influence every dimension of our world."²³² There is also a darker anti-hero, his father, behind the darkness of that hero.

Intellectually, Norbert did amount to much and yes, his father can surely take a great deal of credit for that, but would Leo also be prepared to take credit for his son's emotional disabilities? Because Norbert had all his limbs, he does not look obviously

malformed, but a malformed adult he was. Conway and Siegelman again. “... the many witnesses to his life describe many different and sometimes mutually exclusive Norbert Wiener: one brilliant, one deficient, one robust, one infirm, one playful, one wrathful, one competitive, one magnanimous, One insecure, one egotistical, one self-promoting, one supremely humble.”²³³

His amusing eccentricities take on a different aspect in this light. Consider the moving house incident, for instance. Swathes of his neuronal connections had been so pressed into the service of such fields as mathematics that those relegated to certain practicalities that would be important for adult life were thoroughly dominated and their feeble flickering subconsciously ignored. It happened from the outset because the young Norbert's brain went into survival mode in response to father's instructional intensity as if getting the mathematics correct was a matter of life and death. In one case trivialising practicalities merely created a nuisance, in another it could easily have been tragic. Take the blizzard incident. Even with all his very adult, intellectual cognition there was still too much child in him to appreciate the foolhardiness of venturing out in those conditions, but fortunately just enough adult in him physically to make it successful. Childishness joined with adult power is risky indeed. If he had perished that day he might have been relegated to history as a classic “Darwin Award” winner. The award commemorates “those individuals who ensure the long-term survival of our species by removing themselves from the gene pool in a sublimely idiotic fashion.”²³⁴ There should be a separate award for parents who mould their children such that they are vulnerable to such hazards.

According to Conway and Siegelman his oratory idiosyncrasy had a root, “That first manifestation of the adult Wiener’s legendary eccentricity—his anachronistic manner of speaking and writing—may have looked like an ill-conceived attempt to compensate for his relative youth in his first academic position, but it was no affectation. It traced back to his recitations under Leo’s pedantic tutelage, and to his immersion in European academic culture in its fading days before the Great War.”²³⁵

Norbert's idiosyncratic responses to life become more understandable given his upbringing, and his wife. She played him to her heart's content, if you can call it a heart. Jerome Lettvin, a professor at MIT, recalls an incident, “Wiener received a letter from a math student at Worcester Polytech that said, ‘We don’t have any money, but would you consider coming to give us a lecture?’ He was delighted. He always said, ‘Any student of mathematics is a friend of mine’ So he wrote back and told them he would come. Then, that evening his wife said, ‘How dare you go to some little place for free. It’s as if you’re worth nothing’ She triggered him into writing a horrible letter severing all relations with Worcester Polytech. The students never understood what caused it.”²³⁶ He flipped so easily because he wasn't developed enough in his emotional being, his personhood lacked a certain depth.

At the family dinners Norbert would not infrequently slip into sexual innuendo, as if he were an adolescent that had only recently discovered the sex phenomenon, to the embarrassment of his daughters. Margaret, on the other hand, was sexually very repressed. Peggy wondered, "How she had children I'll never know. Probably she just closed her eyes and thought of Germany."²³⁷ Norbert was quieter in other matters. His colleague Fagi Levinson recalls that at a dinner, "Margaret spoke very openly about the fact that her relatives in Germany were members of the Nazi party. "She said, 'After all, how else are they going to keep a job?' Norbert would turn red but would never say anything, because she was his wife and she was faithful and she stood his tempers and all the rest."²³⁸ Is there not another reason? Norbert had learnt from dealing with his father how to suffer in silence.

Had Leo been more of a warmly affectionate father and less of a tyrannical teacher might Norbert have been more emotionally developed but have missed out on becoming the founder of Cybernetics and the father of the Information Age? Only God knows, but entirely possible. Norbert does ask, "Have I gained or lost from my father's unconventional training? I do not know, for I have had only one life to live. My conjecture is that under a more conventional and milder regime I might have come through with less emotional trauma, but that I would not have developed the strong individuality of my scientific vein, which was due to early contact with a very powerful and very individualistic man."²³⁹ Wouldn't both fields have come about eventually anyway? At what cost did they come out earlier?

Norbert, who had shared a class with Billy Sidis at Harvard, had followed his case and had seen the price that was paid there. He simmered over a "cruel and quite uncalled-for article," in which Billy was "pilloried like a side-show freak for fools to gape at." The "gentlemen responsible," said Norbert, who knew inner pain full well, "... overlooked the fact that W.J. Sidis was still alive and could be hurt very deeply."

While Norbert was, "loath to add my name to the excessive stream of condemnation of Boris Sidis," he does say, "It was perfectly clear that the later collapse of Sidis was in large measure his father's making," and "If any man had done wrong, it was his father ..." and "Sidis's failure was in large part the failure of his parents."²⁴⁰ One might question Norbert's credentials in evaluating Boris. However, he does *have* a certain expertise in what he experienced, emotionally, under his own father. No-one is privy to that like he is and this must count for much. However, unlike Boris he is not a psychologist or psychiatrist and would he not need to have had a normal father to know what one looks like? His was abnormal at least to a not insignificant extent. Because of this, if anything, Norbert may well have underplayed how inadequate Boris was as a father.

A psychologist could point out another dynamic that may lead Norbert to underplay the inadequacy. For his own well-being he needs to believe that there is some residue of unconditional paternal love there because the alternative is too much to bear. And

so Norbert believes that his emotionally harsh regimen was for his own good. He writes, “I worked unconscionably hard, under a pressure which, though loving, was unconscionably severe.”²⁴¹ If Norbert had joined in with the condemning of Boris, would he not need to have condemned his own father, something he might be especially loath to do?

What Norbert does do is accuse the psychiatrist Boris of focusing so much on the fine print that he missed the large. In closing his account of Billy Sidis he writes, “My father could give me only what my father had: his sincerity, his brilliance, his learning, and his passion. These qualities are not to be picked up on every street corner.”²⁴² These are very noble qualities for a mature and exceptional adult, but what about common garden variety paternal affection? Did Leo just not have this or is it just not worth bothering about? Is Norbert not missing an even larger print? Is gracious presence not far greater than a grand program?

He continues, “... let those who choose to carve a human soul to their own measure be sure that they have a worthy image after which to carve it, and let them know that the power of molding an emerging intellect is a power of death as well as a power of life.”²⁴³ However, a parent is not merely involved in moulding the intellect, but also the rest of the child. The person as a whole, emotions included, is the larger print and it is not just about life and death. One can be alive and in an emotional hell. Norbert's commentary on Billy's case has application to himself too. Unlike Billy, Norbert lived to his three score years and ten, but in its emotional tempestuousness, was his life not in many ways a living death brought on, in large part, by his father who had missed the large print? His father was a worthy image in many respects, but he was sorely lacking in others and this deeply contributed to his son's lifelong emotional pain. His daughter, Barbara, noted that he “... lived with the fear that he was his father's creation.”²⁴⁴ Notice how diametrically opposite to the emotionally robust Robert “Romeo” Coates was Norbert Wiener. Coates's father neglected his son intellectually, but must have done something right emotionally.

“... let those who choose to carve a human soul to their own measure be sure that they have a worthy image after which to carve it, and let them know that the power of molding an emerging intellect is a power of death as well as a power of life.”

(Norbert Wiener)

In a biographical review, Norbert was described as the precocious genius, “who felt himself so far out of the science establishment that he resigned from the U. S. National Academy of Sciences; so isolated that he stalked the halls of American Mathematical Society meetings peering nearsightedly to find a friendly face; so estranged from humanity that he wrote a novel whose principal character was an unorthodox genius who finally killed himself in despair at his lack of appreciation by his colleagues ...”²⁴⁵

Heims describes Weiner's social and emotional misery thus, “Though many found the adult Norbert Wiener lovable, as a mature man he was a moody person. At times delightful and generous, with a high good humor, he at other times reflected personal tensions in ways that made him a difficult man, hypersensitive to slights and alternating between conceit and self-deprecation. As his autobiography shows, he had an inner core of pain. When something touched it—especially if he, with his sense of vulnerability, suspected someone had betrayed him or taken advantage of him—he could be extremely harsh, even to old friends. He left a string of abruptly broken friendships.”²⁴⁶

It has been said that there is no such thing as failed experiments because we always learn something from them. What we learn from Leo's experiment, or should learn, is that a father can fail his child even while making him into a great intellectual success. The bigotry of Leo had fostered a strange kind of bigotry in his son. Norbert also did not read others properly. Behind every face lurked his greatest dread, a despotic disciplinarian about to make him morally raw. He also did not read himself properly. *Ex-prodigy* does not pick up much on his emotional pain or loneliness, very possibly because it was too painful for him to bear. 'Pain' is only mentioned four times and only once in the context of his own emotions. His own loneliness is only mentioned twice as if it were a very sporadic problem.

In his second autobiography, entitled *I am a Mathematician* he explicitly says that he will avoid his emotional life to focus on his professional career. But, it is different now. He has already played his hand as a father and has to face whether or not he was a good one. It is easier to look critically at one's parents than at oneself as a parent. Sadly, just as Boris became estranged from Billy, so Norbert became estranged from Barbara. When Norbert and Margaret left for a stint in Europe, she did not say goodbye. Conway and Siegelman write, “She had had no contact with either of them for several years and, as it happened, she picked the worst possible moment to break things off for good. On the eve of their departure, Wiener called his favorite daughter one more time. Still deeply hurt by events from the past, she would not come to the phone. “I just couldn't face him,” Barbara admitted. “I felt he would have pleaded for me to come back, to be friends again, and I wouldn't have been able to refuse him. I felt it was better just not to talk.””²⁴⁷ His own emotional issues had made their own impact. Norbert couldn't, in pride, write an autobiography entitled *I am a Father*.

Thus Leo's sins were passed onto his son and thereby affecting his granddaughter. The butterfly effect traverses generations.

Norbert is an extreme case of adult specialisation, yet he illustrates the general pattern. Children are the generalists. You are much better off asking a young child to read another person than Norbert, however low is her IQ. He has become too entrenched in an impersonal way of being. Whatever you do, don't consult with him over knowing God, however high is his IQ. If he can't read people he can see, how is he going to read a Person he can't? If he can have quarrels with people for no good reason, why should anyone take his quarrel with God seriously? He did take it upon himself to play theologian, writing a book entitled "*God and Golem, Inc.*"²⁴⁸ While it does have profound things to say *about* God, such is not the basis for *knowing* Him, especially considering how impersonally he regarded God.

With an IQ of 185, a friend of mine has to be in the same ballpark as William James Sidis and Norbert Wiener. This doesn't stop him going to the gym to do weight training and encouraging me to do the same. We noticed a regular there who looked like a Roman athlete from the Asterix comics. He had a very muscular upper body with puny legs. He believed in working out only the upper body and it showed. He looked ridiculous to us. It is physically less obvious, but Boris Sidis and Leo Wiener believed their children should only work out their very upper body - above the eyebrows and towards the left hemisphere. In critical ways they came out as caricatures of the human person. See my book, *Unnatural Intelligence*, for a discussion on the troubles with left brain hemisphere dominance.²⁴⁹

Bobby the belligerent

How does a Jew become vocally anti-Semitic, deny the Holocaust and become a great fan of Adolf Hitler? How does a US citizen come to applaud Al Qaeda for the September 11 attacks in 2001? How did someone who said, "I read a book lately by Nietzsche and he says religion is just to dull the senses of the people. I agree" then go on to join a cult, namely Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God? It is easy to see someone with such a level of bigotry as monstrous. Another perspective is that he was inadequately nurtured. It takes personal nurturing to have the wherewithal to appreciate the perspective of others.

Introducing Bobby Fischer (see accompanying image). Bobby who became the belligerent was the prodigy that astounded the world over his grandmastery of chess. He became the U S. Chess Champion at just fourteen years of age and International Grandmaster the following year. He was so formidable that "There was talk among grandmasters that Fischer hypnotized his opponents, that he undermined their intellectual powers with a dark, mystic, insidious force."²⁵⁰



A chess player and psychologist, Reuben Fine, who was personally acquainted with Fischer said, “Some of Bobby's behavior is so strange, unpredictable, odd and bizarre that even his most ardent apologists have had a hard time explaining what makes him tick.” To Fine he was “a troubled human being” with “obvious personal problems.”²⁵¹ Psychologists Joseph Ponterotto and Jason Reynolds stress that understanding the complexities of the psyche of a human person and someone as enigmatic as Bobby Fischer requires looking across multiple dimensions. One critical dimension is possible genetic predispositions to mental illness. Evidence of mental illness had been found in his mother as well as grandmother, Natalie Wender, likely biological father Paul Nemenyi and half-brother Peter Nemenyi.²⁵² There has been a great deal of surmising about the mental illnesses Fischer might have had, but he was never formally diagnosed with anything. The chess player, psychiatrist and friend Magnús Skúlason adamantly denied that Fischer had schizophrenia, saying, “He had problems,

possibly certain childhood traumas that had affected him. He was misunderstood. Underneath I think he was a caring, sensitive person.”²⁵³ Since Fischer was not personally examined by an appropriate professional, there are ethical restraints on providing a formal diagnosis as Ponterotto and Reynolds point out. Yet they do give a tentative, professional diagnosis: paranoid personality disorder followed by delusional disorder in later life.²⁵⁴

There is another critical dimension. It is not mutually exclusive, but intersecting, and that dimension is *attachment* or lack of it. Ponterotto and Reynolds say “... it is evident that some of Fischer’s struggles can be traced back to the context of his early childhood identity and attachment struggles in the 1940s” and “Regina Fischer’s financial difficulties, absence from the home, unstable housing conditions, and psychological challenges were contributing factors to [Bobby] Fischer’s enduring suspicion and mistrust of others. Furthermore, there was no father at home to serve as a primary caregiver.”²⁵⁵

It is clear that Regina Fischer was an extremely committed provider, but as a single parent working extremely long hours to make ends meet in the aftermath of the great depression, she had limited options. She gave material provisions to her son, but not her maternal presence. Ponterotto and Reynolds say that Bobby “... felt emotionally abandoned by his mother Regina Fischer and by his biological father Paul Nemenyi ...” They note that “... his mother Regina would host parties where her “Jewish Intellectual” friends would come over to their apartment and engage in various discourse, while Fischer waited in the bedroom for the guests to leave so that he could have some time with his mother.”²⁵⁶

The biographer, Frank Brady, picked up on the same theme, saying of Bobby, “He was often alone. When he came home from school, it was usually to an empty apartment ... Though Regina was concerned about her son, the simple truth was that Bobby was a latchkey child who craved but was not given the maternal presence that might have helped him develop a sense of security.” Brady adds in an understatement, “And it didn’t help that there was no father present.”²⁵⁷

How did a bright boy respond to his mother's absence? He became increasingly attached to chess and increasingly detached from other persons and interests. He became so preoccupied with chess that “by the time he reached the fourth grade, he'd been in and out of six schools” eventually dropping out of high school at sixteen. “All I want to do, ever” he said, “is play chess.” It was said that “... chess was his savior.”²⁵⁸ In a chapter entitled “Loneliness to Passion” Brady writes, “... as time went on, Bobby just kept journeying more and more into himself, once again reading chess books and playing over games from the past. The possibilities of Chess somehow made his essential loneliness and Insecurity less painful.”²⁵⁹ A fellow chess player commented on him, “When we were introduced, I noticed that he never looked up. I thought that he had, perhaps, dropped something and was still looking for it. But later,

when he joined the Manhattan Chess Club, I noticed that he still could not make eye contact.²⁶⁰

“Lacking a father-figure his whole life and denying his own Jewish heritage, two normal paths to personal identity development, Fischer long searched for his sense of identity. It was in the game of chess, where he was markedly successful and adored, that he found his route to identity.” In essence his personal identity became fused with his chess identity, and the apex of his chess and personal identity formation would be reaching the World Chess Championship title ... Fischer, in his 1972 defeat of Boris Spassky had finally found his identity; after searching for 29 years.”²⁶¹

“Lacking a father-figure his whole life and denying his own Jewish heritage, two normal paths to personal identity development, Fischer long searched for his sense of identity. It was in the game of chess, where he was markedly successful and adored, that he found his route to identity.”

(Psychologists Joseph Ponterotto and Jason Reynolds)

They go on to suggest that Fischer's withdrawal from the 1975 world championship was due to his not wanting to risk losing his identity. There is, perhaps, another layer. The public spotlight brought the risk of being abandoned by the many. By preemptively rejecting the many he could avoid the pain of their rejection of him. He had learnt to reduce the hurt by retreating into himself.

Bobby would spend much of his life antagonising others, even those closest to him. He was appreciating a good move in chess without realising that kicking a headmaster is not a wise move. The latter's move was to expel him. Check mate. Before we rush to judge him, consider that God alone knows what would have happened if he had made other choices. Fischer worked with what he had. He did not choose a single parent nor did he choose his genes. It is a little like him taking over a game of chess from someone who is not a very good player. It has been commented that Fischer's life turned into a sad, lonely endgame. This has to do with his choices, sure, but also the choices of those who had come before him.

With Bobby retreating into himself, how is he going to learn from others apart from the narrow domain of chess? The proverbial independence of adolescence was thrust upon Bobby long before he reached the age of adolescence. He was required to fly like a butterfly while still very much a caterpillar. Put adult type stresses on a genetically vulnerable child and should we be surprised by very negative outcomes? Bobby fits the classic diathesis-stress model of the development of psychopathology. In simple terms, for all his mastery of chess and “astronomically high IQ”, Fischer remained pathologically underdeveloped in so much else, especially in his relationships with others.

Effectively abandoning a child is a recipe for creating a bigot and Fischer obliged, big time. While we have seen that this American-Jew was both Anti-American and anti-Semitic, he was also a misogynist saying, “They are all weak, all women. They are stupid compared to men.”²⁶² When a Grandmaster player concernedly suggested that the then nineteen year old Fischer see a psychiatrist, he replied, “A psychiatrist ought to pay him for the privilege of working on his brain.” A line worthy of a comedic fiction about a precocious kid was sadly real-life. The novelist Arthur Koestler famously coined the term mimophant to describe Bobby, “A mimophant is a hybrid species: a cross between a mimosa and an elephant. A member of this species is sensitive like a mimosa where his own feelings are concerned and thick-skinned like an elephant trampling over the feelings of others.”²⁶³

Was his spitting on an order forbidding him to play in a match held in a country sanctioned by the United Nations not ostensibly a tantrum? For all his genius IQ, he fell for the conspiratorial anti-Semitic *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a ridiculously bogus tract, exposed as such decades before Fischer was born.

Unlike the anonymous troubled child described in the first chapter, the reason we even know about Bobby’s foibles is that he became such a chess celebrity. In the unaccomplished, these would have been passed by, relatively unnoticed. He stands out as an oddity because we struggle to accept that such a contrast can exist between high intelligence and downright silliness within a single person.

It has been said, “Prodigies from past eras were frequently isolated from normal activities and friendships, their talents exploited by friends and family for financial purposes.”²⁶⁴ In short, they welcomed the professional success of prodigies at the cost of their personal failure. A similar dynamic happened with Bobby at the hands of his fellow chess club members. “At the Marshall Chess Club, no one doubted the teenager’s talent. But his prickly behavior was alienating some of the wealthy sponsors whose support he would need to rise to the top. ... What to do? Board members talked about finding a psychiatrist. ... Then someone raised a question: What if therapy worked? What if treatment sapped Fischer’s drive to win, depriving the United States of its first homegrown world champ? Meeting adjourned. No one ...

wanted to tamper with that finely tuned brain”²⁶⁵ Is Bobby Fisher not rather opposite to Robert “Romeo” Coates?

The hurricanes called Bobby Fischer and Norbert Wiener are just two variants of the butterfly effect. A different conjunction of factors can lead to very different categories of trouble altogether.

The most dangerous son of a sociopath

With the butterfly effect spanning generations you might expect the granddaughter of a psychopath to turn out very badly indeed. This did not happen in the case of Mary who would go on to become a clinical psychologist. Why? The sociopath in question, a Mr. Drumpf, was extremely interested, not in the healthy development of his very own children, but in the development of his real estate empire. What would happen to his emotionally *sensitive* older son, Freddy, and his emotionally *insensitive* younger one, Donny? Mary would go on to document the saga as a psychologist and member of the wider family. Far from loving his boys unconditionally, Mr. Drumpf made it very clear that his acceptance of them depended on their performance as judged by him. On top of this the boys had to contend not only with a largely physically absent mother, but also with an emotionally absent one.

You can get a picture into the psyche of Mr. Drumpf by peering through a window of one of the apartments he was renting out. The tenants had been complaining of the cold. Mr. Drumpf had taken off his coat before he entered the apartment revealing a short-sleeved shirt. He then comments that it is like a sauna in the place.²⁶⁶ Clearly the profit margin is critical and the well-being of his tenants of little relevance.

You can get a picture of the psyche of the family as a whole by peering through a window into their home one Thanksgiving. Donny's mother begins choking on a piece of food. Except for Freddy, those seated at the table looked up briefly then carried on eating. One sibling took his mother to the kitchen and did the Heimlich manoeuvre. Upon returning the comment was “good job Freddy” as if he “had just killed a mosquito.”²⁶⁷

Praising Freddy was rare. Donny looked on as his father repeatedly and gravely humiliated his older brother over any apology or sign of weakness. Mary says, “One of the few pleasures my grandfather had, aside from making money, was humiliating others.”²⁶⁸ I used the term 'gravely' deliberately. As an adult, Freddy became increasingly depressed, addicted to alcohol, lost his family and took to keeping little animals, not unlike Lennie Small. As I have documented elsewhere, sending children off to boarding school is a terrible idea, but in this case would Freddy not have been better off? After a very troubled life, he came to live less than half as long as his emotionally abusive father. Child and adult psychiatrist Steve Wruble says that he “essentially killed himself under his father’s rule.”²⁶⁹

As for Donny, Mr. Drumpf was grooming him to be a professional success at the expense of his personal development. Donny learnt full well from his father's meticulous dismantling of his brother that what counts is not your person, but your persona. And money. "You need to fake it until you make it" as the expression goes. Donny became supremely successful at this. He became increasingly attached to money and increasingly detached from people, even those closest to him.

Mary says that Mr. Drumpf "... was willing to stake millions of dollars on his son because he believed he could leverage the skills ..." Donny did have "... as a savant of self-promotion, shameless liar, marketer, and builder of brands—to achieve the one thing that had always eluded him: a level of fame that matched his ego and satisfied his ambition in a way money alone never could."²⁷⁰ "His real skills (self-aggrandizement, lying, and sleight of hand) were interpreted as strengths unique to his brand of success."²⁷¹ Donny covered up his lack of proficiencies by merely playing the adult.

Donny was used by his father as humans use silkworm moths. The moths have lost the ability to fly under human domestication. It is the production of silk in their immature stage that is lucrative. Donny's immature bravado was used to great effect in establishing the Drumpf brand at the cost of him developing into a mature adult. Mary says that he "... is not simply weak, his ego is a fragile thing that must be bolstered every moment because he knows deep down that he is nothing of what he claims to be. He knows he has never been loved ..." and "... today is much as he was at three years old: incapable of growing, learning, or evolving, unable to regulate his emotions, moderate his responses, or take in and synthesize information ..."²⁷²

Psychologist Alice Miller perceptively unpacks the dynamic in these sorts of cases, "Thus we perpetuate the loneliness of childhood: We despise weakness, helplessness, uncertainty—in short, the child in ourselves and in others. The contempt for others in grandiose, successful people always includes disrespect for their own true selves, as their scorn implies: "Without these superior qualities of mine, a person is completely worthless." This means further: "Without these achievements, these gifts, I could never be loved, would never have been loved." Grandiosity in the adult guarantees that the illusion continues: 'I was loved.'²⁷³

This does not mean he is not a great success. Donny became like those pet rocks, marketed very well with a superficial exterior that has public appeal but without personal character. He is all posture, image and brand. This works well in the public arena. The people he has personally swindled and lied to are a drop in the public ocean. There is that other dynamic picked up by Steinbeck and similarly by English professor Paul Collins, "... we laud men and women who have no better quality than the possession of money, and who achieve their success on the backs of the swindled and disdained. We want to believe that there is something more to their success than

mere good luck. Even more than a moral loser, we cannot bear the thought of an immoral success.”²⁷⁴

Mary is far from alone in her assessment that there is something seriously amiss with Donny. For instance, clinical psychiatrist Lance Dodes says that his “speech and behavior show that he has severe sociopathic traits” which he puts down to a developmentally primitive condition. “The primitive nature of people with sociopathic traits can also be seen through the findings of brain research. In early life, along with its psychological developments, the brain is developing physically. It is notable that people with sociopathic traits have been found to have abnormalities in the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala regions of their brains, areas closely associated with essential cognitive and emotional functions.”²⁷⁵ Donny has virtually admitted his arrested development, “When I look at myself in the first grade and I look at myself now, I’m basically the same.”²⁷⁶ Tony Schwartz, who co-wrote a book with him says, “His development essentially ended in early childhood.”²⁷⁷

“It is notable that people with sociopathic traits have been found to have abnormalities in the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala regions of their brains, areas closely associated with essential cognitive and emotional functions.”

(Clinical psychiatrist Lance Dodes)

A great many have been taken in by Donny, including banks. With so much invested in him, it became expedient to work with him, creating an unholy symbiosis. They indulged him, behaving as permissive parents. As a result, they aided and abetted him in making monetary figures the main story with the cost to human beings a side story. In so doing they revealed that they are largely mirror images of him, albeit polished in their sophistication. The butterfly effect in Donny produced financial hurricanes and worse. Donny happens to be rabidly anti-immigrant despite having an immigrant father. Considering the other cases recounted, there are certain patterns around bigotry.

It is fortunate for Mary that, unlike in the case of Marietta and Big John B. Watson, her mother got in the way and mitigated the influence of her grandfather. Mary knew parental love and, being a psychologist, also knows about it and the lack of it. Her father is Freddy, the elder son of Mr. Drumpf, who died prematurely. It is high time I

came clean and revealed that I took some licence in using the name 'Drumpf.' It is the family's ancestral name. Donny's name is Donald J. Trump. Mary's book is subtitled, *How my family created the most dangerous man in the world.*

As a genre, horror movies tend to bore me with their implausibility, but *The Twilight Zone*, at least a clip within, is very unnerving. A woman's car breaks down and while looking for help, she happens upon a house with an unusual family. Apart from the boy, everyone is on excruciating tenterhooks. It soon becomes apparent why. At the slightest grievance, the boy wielded considerable psychic ability on the offending family member. A slight grievance and the boy sent his older sister inside a scene of an animated movie playing on the TV! It is a most disconcerting account of immaturity coupled to formidable power. Trump's antics might amuse some, but his clown aspect also comes with a crown (see accompanying image). He is not just a president, but also somewhat representative of the country. Here is a superpower with those that relish it and, thanks to John B. Watson and his ilk, cannot be insignificantly made up of those that are personally underdeveloped. Is it not, potentially, very foreboding indeed?



Martin the monstrously “mother”ed

“As a child, Martin is beaten by his father and rejected by his mother. It sounds like a case study lifted from the book “The Drama of the Gifted Child” by world-renowned Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller, except his situation is a unique one: his mother is the author herself.”²⁷⁸ Yes, this is the very same psychologist Alice Miller, from whom I quote liberally in this book.

She was a professional success and a parental failure.

According to her son Martin he was betrayed by the one who wrote, *Thou Shalt not be Aware: Society's Betrayal of the Child*, he was disregarded as a person and emotionally assaulted by the cold, uncaring one who wrote *The Truth will Set You Free: Overcoming Emotional Blindness*, he experienced destructive and exploitative cruelty from the one who wrote *The Body Never Lies: The Lingering Effects of Cruel Parenting*, was imprisoned by lies by the one who wrote *Free from Lies: Discovering your True Needs* and he was forced to pretend to be someone else in order to protect his authentic identity from the one who wrote *The Drama of Being a Child and the Search for the True Self*. This is a drama as melodramatically quirky and ironic as one might find in a soap opera and yet it is very much real life. With Alice Miller becoming a world famous psychologist, many presumed that her children would have had an ideal mother. Her son Martin points out that that ideal only existed in his mother's books. Martin's real mother and father were monsters.

Alice Miller wrote compellingly about the devastating impact of emotional abuse on children and yet she herself was such an abuser. Martin Miller, a psychotherapist, writes, “... my mother was a cruel human being, she destroyed the lives of her two children without any trace of a guilty conscience, while she believed herself to be loving and caring.” He poignantly asks, “Why did I need sixty years to see how cruel, destructive, exploitative, thoroughly mendacious and loveless my mother was? That she systematically destroyed love and life within me, and later did the same with my sister and my nephew?”²⁷⁹ Martin's father despised, humiliated and physically abused him in her mother's presence without his mother ever intervening. Martin's parents made a point of speaking to each other in a language he could not understand. He felt like a foreigner in his own home.

There is a pattern emerging with ChatGPT, reflecting our common bias. When I asked it was stood out about Alice Miller, it only mentioned her professional success not her personal failure. If Alice was able to attach herself to anything it was to the great psychological theory of attachment, not to actual persons such as her children. How can this be?

Alice Miller knew exactly why. There is a big clue in her confession, “It is a great insult to learn from your own child how heartlessly, blindly and stupidly one treated

one's own child. One wants to forget it and have it forgiven ... I finally had to look in the mirror. I had to see that I had treated my first child almost like my mother had treated me." Recall what Ashley Montagu said, "The *only way* one learns to love is by being loved"²⁸⁰ (emphasis mine). While as a professional psychologist Alice was very adult in *knowing about* motherly love, as a child she didn't *know* motherly love. As a result she became very adulterated in being a loving mother towards Martin. The word 'learn' in Montagu's statement is potentially misleading. It is too aligned with the intellect as would befit an acclaimed anthropologist. A better way to express it is, "The *only way to be* loving is by being loved."

The only way to be loving is by being loved.

One might be tempted to say that Alice was never meant to be a mother. It is more accurate to say that she was not developed to be a mother. She missed what was crucial in her own kiddypillar stage. All her psychological training could not make up for that. She had an emotionally cold mother herself and as still a teenager seduced a man to prevent him turning her and her family over to the Gestapo. The man eventually became her husband and the father of her children. Thus her childhood was diluted and shortened which is why we should not condemn her. Her life illustrates how critical childhood really is. All her considerable psychological proficiency was unable to make up for what was not provided for her in her own childhood.

Cleanliness is next to ungodliness

I asked the ChatGPT AI to provide a humorous anecdote illustrating the need for letting children be children. This is what it wrote:

"Sarah, a very meticulous and by-the-book parent, was determined to raise her son, Tommy, to become a perfect gentleman. One sunny afternoon, they were at the park when Tommy, a ball of boundless energy, came across a gloriously muddy puddle.

Sarah's internal neat freak went into overdrive. "Tommy, no! Don't even think about it!" she shrieked. "Those clothes are brand new! And mud is dirty and bad for you!"

Tommy, with the irrepressible exuberance of a five-year-old, countered, "But Mommy, puddles are for splashing!"

Undeterred, Sarah launched into a mini-lecture on the importance of cleanliness and proper clothing care. Tommy, however, was already halfway into the puddle, giggling with glee as muddy rivulets cascaded down his legs.

Just then, an elderly gentleman sitting on a nearby bench chuckled. “Looks like your little guy is having a blast, ma'am,” he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Slightly defeated, Sarah sighed. “He's impossible sometimes,” she muttered.

The gentleman smiled gently. “Let him be a kid, honey. You can't wash away childhood.””

Charming. The AI certainly picked up on the propensity of certain adults to curtail child exuberance, but what it has the elderly gentleman say is not quite right. As we have seen, very sadly and portentously, to a considerable extent childhood *can* be washed away with dreadful consequences, through the Butterfly Effect, for the child and future generations. It should have had the gentleman say, “You *shouldn't* wash away childhood.” As we have seen, such cleanliness is next to ungodliness in that it is an outrage against the created order. We have evolved to have an extended childhood with close parental contact as messy as that may well be.

Now how is this for an experiment? Imagine that God Himself went very lateral and visited earth, taking on human form not as an adult, but as a baby? What sort of childhood would He be prepared to go along with? How lateral would He be prepared to go? It would be very suggestive indeed if even He “played safe” and did not venture from a normal childhood.

[The Greatest Metamorphosis](#)

Justin's Jesus

A story is told of a toddler at a communion service. “Justin, my two-year-old son, sat quietly on my lap. During a silent moment in the service, he looked up at the altar with the traditional statue of Jesus outstretched on the cross and wearing only a loincloth, and he happily shouted, “Look, Mommy, Jesus wears a diaper just like me!” The entire church broke into laughter as I scrunched down in my seat, trying to become invisible.”²⁸¹ With our adult inclination to know about stuff we can easily focus on Justin childishly getting the details wrong and miss that he got the passionate picture so very right. He had his attention on the figure on the cross with the expectation that Jesus identifies with him. That is a crucial point of the passion. The minister laughed and responded, “Blessed are the little children.”

Blessed indeed. Little children are more inclined to see the person, as we have seen, and are less susceptible to embarrassment. Just as a certain very adult intellectualism can lead one to gloss over children, it can lead one to gloss over the Baby in the manger and even find in him a theological embarrassment, as we will see. As with our predilections to seeing butterflies over caterpillars, we have susceptibilities to seeing

the birth of the Baby Jesus as just an introduction to the much more significant events such as his calming of the storm that happened well into his adulthood.

**“Look, Mommy, Jesus wears a diaper
just like me!”**

(Toddler Justin)

The childhood of God Incarnate

Not so fast. That God Incarnate was, for a time, a child means that he started authentically immature (see accompanying painting, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (1568) by Frans Floris the Elder). He who fed the five thousand began His earthly life feeding at his mother's breast. He who made the lame man walk had to take His first step. He who gave the sermon on the mount had to say His first word. It was likely 'abba,' not because Joseph was so important, but because His mother was. There was a time when Jesus did not distinguish His mother from Himself! How is that for God identifying with humanity? The first important human *other* for Jesus was Joseph. Perhaps we could take a cue from the toddler Justin and factor the Baby Jesus more into our theology.



It is striking that in the Gospels, the childhood of Jesus is spent so much outside of the public eye. To be sure, He did astound the teachers in the synagogue at just thirteen years old, but outside of that He does not seem to have done anything of note. There are no miracles recorded prior to the beginning of His ministry at around thirty years old except for those very dubious apocryphal ones. What was God the Father thinking? Why did He not hurry things up and have a spiritual prodigy catapulted into the public arena to inspire future generations of children? Why did God choose such an unexceptional figure as Joseph to be the father of the baby Jesus? If God had chosen someone more like Boris Sidis or Leo Wiener perhaps Jesus would have given the Sermon on the Mount at the age of thirteen in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Roman and have actually written a book or two. If child prodigies can accomplish so much, imagine what Jesus could have done! Wouldn't something like His calming of the storm have been far more impactful if Jesus had been just six years old at the time? If there is one person in history whose childhood would be presumably safest to

experiment upon, humanly speaking, it would surely be God Incarnate and yet neither Jesus's Heavenly Father or earthly father do so. As Alice Miller says, "From His early days Jesus also knew another father — Joseph, who never called attention to himself, who protected and loved Mary and the child, encouraged the child, assigned him central importance, and served him. It must have been this modest man who made it possible for the child to distinguish what was true and to experience the meaning of love."²⁸²

After Jesus left the synagogue with his parents, Luke expressly says, "Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them ... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2: 51-52). It seems enough for God that Jesus is given a natural childhood under loving parents. Indeed, if you look at the overall life history of God Incarnate, it is His childhood that is accentuated in its duration. His career as an itinerant preacher was cut short by His crucifixion, lasting just three years. Thus, almost two thirds of His earthly life was spent as a minor. If God Incarnate apparently needed a full childhood to become a full adult, how much more so do the rest of us? It should give us pause that there was no skimping on the kiddypillar phase for Jesus with all His significance as the only truly complete human in history.

"Looking at the sky at dusk, I said to Tom (seven): "God paints such a beautiful sunset." Tom said, "And He does it all with His left hand, because Jesus is sitting on His right hand."²⁸³ Again, the child gets his theology completely off, but he does get something very right, his appreciation for the Creator. How about appreciating the Creator for making children the way they are? Since He knows how many hairs each one has, He must have made them with both hands. The message we should be sending children is not "grow up already," but "you are exactly the age God wants you to be."

The resurrection of Jesus is commonly regarded as authenticating his identity as fully God and fully man, but wouldn't 'fully child' be about as accurate? At His birth He was fully God and fully baby. There is heresy called Docetism that underplays the humanness of Jesus. Since a crucial part of our humanness is our childhood, there should be a special theological term for the heresy that downplays the childhood of Jesus. The resurrection is also commonly regarded as the greatest event in history. To be sure, it was a great miracle, but it is still just a miracle. It is something that happened to Jesus, not Jesus himself. It confirms that He is who He claimed to be, Immanuel, God with us. Jesus said so. "A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12: 39-40). A theologian friend of mine, the late John Cumpsty, once explained to me that the resurrection was a concession to human weakness for power. There was no necessity for the Father to make use of the dead body of Jesus.

If Lepidoptera are associated as a motif with the Gospel accounts it is commonly to liken the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Christian apologist Michael Green, for instance, says, "But as it was, all the signs pointed to Jesus' having risen to a new order of life, a new sphere of existence. He left the graveclothes behind as the butterfly emerging to a new dimension of life leaves the cocoon behind it."²⁸⁴ In the Gospels we are told that Jesus, after the resurrection, appeared suddenly before his disciples in a locked room (John 20:19-29). This is a great advance on flying and yet Scripture does not make a big deal out of it. Instead it makes a much bigger deal over the crib and the cross. Jesus said to a religious leader, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" (John 3:12). If we have trouble with such earthly things as caterpillars, why should it be any better with heavenly things?

Most of Jesus' life on earth was as a child, as we saw, and only forty days are given to His appearances after the resurrection. Imagine the impact if He had hung around for longer. Wouldn't startling the emperor Nero a few times have brought him down a notch or two? Philosopher Dallas Willard notes that "Remarkably, even after his resurrection Jesus continued his low-profiled ways. The human mode would have been to pay a post-resurrection visit to Pilate, perhaps, and to say something like, 'Now could we have that discussion about power and truth once again'?"²⁸⁵ The point of these appearances is to confirm the personal identity of Jesus to His disciples not to establish His professional brand. Theologian Kathryn Greene-McCreight is emphatic, "The purpose of the narratives about Jesus' resurrection appearances is not to prove to us that Jesus' dead body was resuscitated, nor that his ghost appeared to the disciples, nor that Jesus metamorphosed into the Christ, like a worm emerges as a butterfly after entering the cocoon. The point of the New Testament resurrection-appearance narratives is to show that the Jesus whom the disciples encountered after his burial is the very same Jesus with whom they had lived, traveled, and ate and drank, the very same Jesus whose death they had witnessed, and the very same Jesus whom they now more fully understood to be the Messiah of Israel and the Son of the living God."²⁸⁶

“Remarkably, even after his resurrection Jesus continued his low-profiled ways. The human mode would have been to pay a post-resurrection visit to Pilate, perhaps, and to say something like, ‘Now could we have that discussion about power and truth once again’”

(Philosopher Dallas Willard)

The greatest metamorphosis, then, is not that Jesus rose from the tomb like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Quite the reverse, it is a little like a butterfly collapsing its wings, spinning a cocoon for itself and emerging a caterpillar. The greatest metamorphosis in all of history and prehistory is that God took on human form, even the form of a baby (see accompanying painting, *Madonna and Child with Butterfly* by Alessandro Varotari (1588–1649). The Incarnation is the reverse of those coming of age stories such as the ugly duckling becoming a beautiful swan. It is the story of the Eternal One immaturing Himself. You might think that Omniscience would have gone a more theologically impressive route. In the words of mother and poet Kathleen Norris, “If Mary had wanted to ‘tell’, she might have come forth with a treatise, or a book of theology. Instead, she had a baby, and that has made all the difference.”²⁸⁷ God went personal rather than propositional. To show us His love the Father got up close to us through His Son.



This is a far lower step down than neoteny evolution such as juvenile insect to worm-like larva. Norbert Wiener said, “we must avoid discussing God and man in the same breath—that is blasphemy.”²⁸⁸ What then of the Creator taking on the form of a creature? God went from Omnipresent to stuck in space and time. You can't get more “grownup” than God the Father. That the Creator of the Cosmos would grow *down* into the form of a creature is a staggering claim. It staggers because it is so subversive of our inclinations towards bigotry. The wonder is not that Jesus is God but that God is Jesus. And Jesus, as we will see, is childlike.

“If Mary had wanted to ‘tell’, she might have come forth with a treatise, or a book of theology. Instead, she had a baby, and that has made all the difference.”

(Mother and poet Kathleen Norris)

Echoing what we saw with 'butterfly' and 'caterpillar,' “Son of God” comes up almost twice as often as “Son of Man” in a Google search.²⁸⁹ The emphasis of Jesus in referring to Himself is very different, using the latter 33 *times* more often than the former.²⁹⁰ In our prejudice, we struggle to see Jesus for who He is. God does the opposite of going the grandly fantastical that is the fare in our fairy tales such as the frog becoming a prince. The Transcendent went natural. The uncreated took on the form of the evolved. God is a smallot not a bigot. Since Isaiah prophesies of the Messiah, “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him ... Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:1), if anything, Jesus is like the caterpillar of a moth rather than the caterpillar of a butterfly. In a Google search, 'butterfly' comes up four times more frequently than does 'moth,' whereas there are nearly seven times as many species of moth as butterfly species.²⁹¹

Almighty God needed something akin to a neotenuous developmental division of labour not because he lacks something, but because *we* do. Let's just say that it would be far easier for a caterpillar to grasp a butterfly than for us to grasp omnipresence. The great reverse metamorphosis lets God get up close with creatures that are stuck in space and time. From His perspective we are more sedentary than a caterpillar and more ephemeral than a butterfly. Through His cunning he fulfils His love for us. It is through this reverse metamorphosis that God provides His greatest revelation of himself to us.

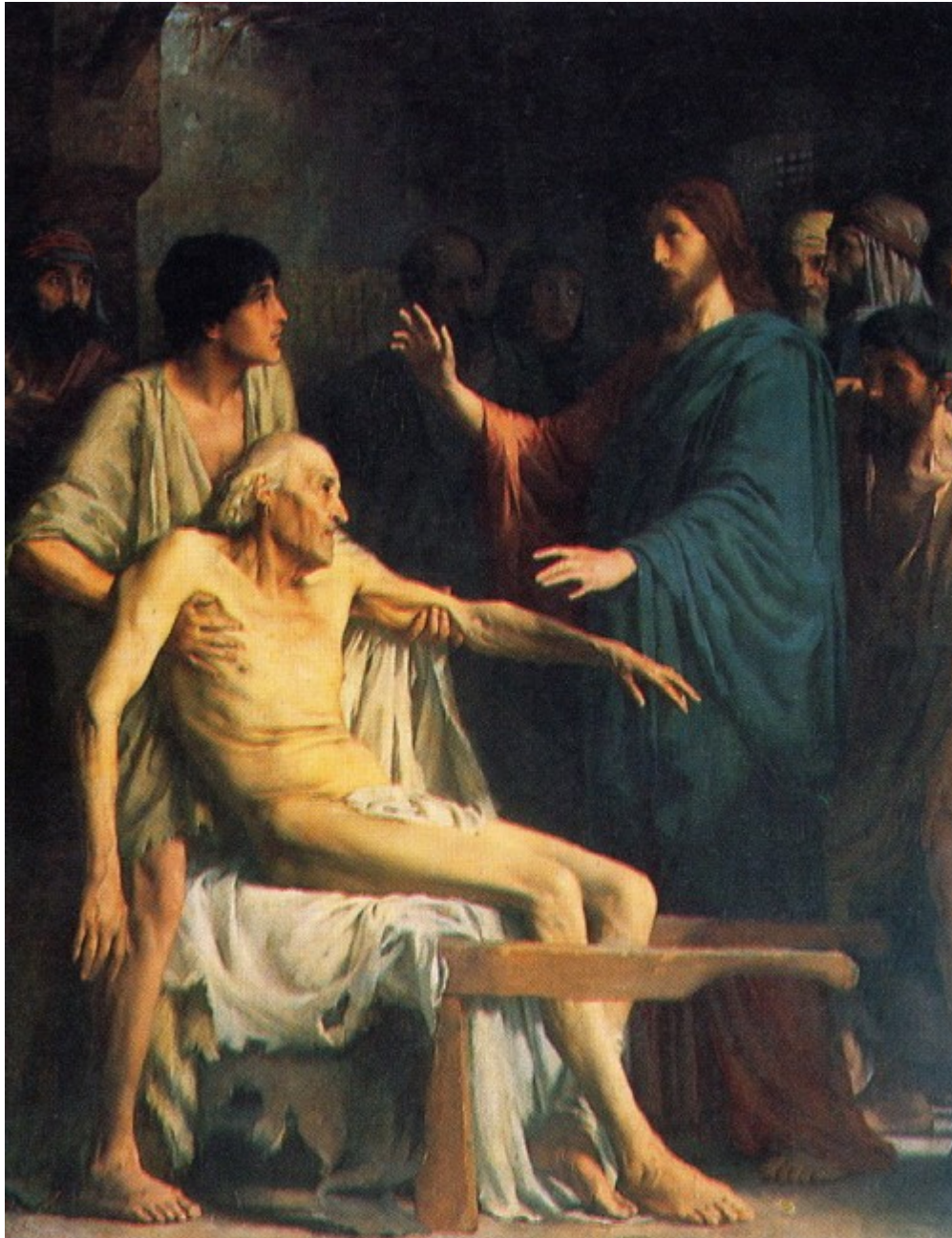
This reverse metamorphosis in Jesus provides a vital corrective to human biases that are compounded in our instant gratification and success-driven age. We celebrate the destination over the journey, end results over the developmental process, the spectacular over the obscure and professionalism over the person. If children are kiddypillars, what can be said of the Baby Jesus? It is a matter of historical record what a game-changer He has been. Not everyone could see this prospect in a child. Simeon could. He had the Holy Spirit on him and lifting up the Child said, “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2: 29-32).

The Person of God Incarnate

But we need to be able to see Jesus for who He is. And this presents a problem. When Jesus made a blind mute see and hear, the Pharisees responded with an attempt at a professional put down, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons” (Matthew 12:24). They could see his power alright, but only as a threat in outclassing them. They could not see *Him*, particularly in His compassion helping the afflicted. Is part of the reason not that they had defined their identity too much by their profession rather than by their relationship with God? Jesus seems to intimate as much when he says, “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). It is entirely possible to see Jesus displaying miraculous powers while missing His Person. A child would have more likely responded along the lines of, “Wow! How did you do that?” If the Pharisees had less status as religious leaders, were less affected by their religious knowledge and, as little children, were more accepting of their needfulness, would they not have been better able to see Him for who He was?

Philosopher Dallas Willard avers, “Knowledge ‘at a distance,’ knowing certain ‘facts’ about something, doesn’t amount to knowing it. It therefore does not have the same power over life. In philosophy we rightly distinguish knowledge by description from knowledge by acquaintance. Only the latter is the interactive relationship, the ‘reality hook,’ that gives us a grasp of the person or the thing ‘itself.’” Out of his own experience Job characteristically remarked to God: “I have heard about you . . . but now my eye sees you. So I take back all I said, and I repent by throwing dust and ashes upon myself” (Job 42:5–6, paraphrase).²⁹²

Consider the incident of Jesus forgiving and healing the paralysed man (see accompanying painting, *Jesus heals the paralytic*²⁹³ (1889) by Charles-Amable Lenoir. I heard a preacher, on the basis of this passage, shouting to the congregation from the pulpit, “Are you just going to settle for forgiveness or are you going to claim healing?” To him, healing was the birthright of those born again. He had completely inverted the emphasis of the passage. After saying to the paralysed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven,” Jesus said to the teachers of the law who baulked at this, “Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home” (Mark 2:5, 9-11).



What the healing Jesus does here is to establish who Jesus is as a Person. The great wonder is that they have someone present who has the divine authority to forgive and the compassion to do so. All healing does is prolong our short physical life. It is God's forgiveness that brings us eternal life. The preacher had fixated on knowing about miraculous stuff whereas the point of the passage was knowing the forgiving Jesus. A six-year-old by the name of Henry could see Jesus better, "Every time I get in trouble at home," he says, "I get sent to my room. Then my mom forgives me. But more important, so does Jesus!"²⁹⁴

No wonder Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). We need to be childlike to see Jesus for who He is, but our very adulthood, especially if it is

adulterated, can keep us from being appropriately childlike. If we are too invested in our own power we will not seek power from above. We need a power that is outside of ourselves and God has provided through the Holy Spirit. Our greatest ambition needs to change from being superlatively professional to being utterly dependent on God's Spirit.

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven”

(Jesus of Nazareth, Matthew 18:3)

The childlikeness of the adult Jesus

There was an incident in which an obscure fellow, no doubt in an attempt to make a quick name for himself, delivered a flying kick to the action movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger at an airport. Arnie did not take much notice and the fellow just bounced off lamely. It might have been a marketing ploy suggested by his agent, but Arnie, who is very slightly less far away from omnipotence than most of us, later claimed that he thought that it was just the jostling of the crowd.

With limited power, a little more power than another easily goes to our heads, myself included. I saw this while having some fun with our youngest daughter, Sharon. When she was still little, my wife gave me a jar with a tight-fitting lid to open. I forced it just enough to make it easy to open then said, “I can't open it. You try Sharry.” She opened it and then went off to brag to her siblings that she was stronger than me!

There is a great contrast between Arnie (and the rest of us) and Jesus. There is an incident in which a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years comes up behind Jesus and touches “the edge of his cloak.” She is instantly healed. Jesus asks, “Who touched me?” Peter replies, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you” to which Jesus responds, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me”(Luke 8:43-46). The remarkable thing is not that Jesus has all this power to heal, but that despite that He is so exquisitely sensitive to an individual woman in the jostling crowd (see accompanying image²⁹⁵). Jesus has far more than the power of Arnie along with the skin of a baby and is not embarrassed to show it.



Alas, with humans it is typically one or the other. For a lark I have challenged labourers to arm wrestling. They think it is going to be a cinch against one getting on in years and then I go ahead and beat them. When I bragged to now grownup Sharon about this, she said I must stop doing it because being strong is part of their job and they could get disheartened. With something of the sensitivity of her Saviour, she is exquisitely aware of the perspective of others.

When Jesus leaves the city of Jericho with a large crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus calls for mercy. Many in the crowd, with far less power or sensitivity than Jesus, rebuke the man, telling him to be quiet. In contrast, Jesus heals the man. What we can easily find less noteworthy is that God Incarnate stops to talk to someone of such disregarded position in society (Mark 10:46-52).

And Jesus, the most complete human in history, is also not embarrassed to expressly admit His childlike dependence on His Father, the very source of His power, "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does ... By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (John 5:19-20,30). Notice that Jesus says this while He is very much an adult. He is in His 30's and has worked for over a decade as a carpenter.

“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.”

(Jesus of Nazareth, John 5:19-20)

There are those who would find this dependency pathetically childish given that humans are created in the image of God. Did God not say “Let us create man in our image?” (Genesis 1:26) and the Apostle Paul enjoined, “Therefore be imitators of God ...” (Ephesians 5:1). What a lofty image and high calling! Notice the 'us' and the 'our.' How many of us have felt created in the image of God enough to use the royal 'we' as in “we are not amused!” This is an image commonly thought to distinguish us from the animals.

Before we get high and mighty with an inappropriate image, it would be prudent to factor Jesus into that image. Theologian Alan J. Torrance says, “The obvious and incontrovertible implication of the doctrine of the incarnation is that, in Christ, we are presented not only with the fullness of the Godhead but also with the fullness of humanity, that is, all that humanity was intended both to be and (as Irenaeus would have it) to become.”²⁹⁶

Secondly, it would be prudent to leave the perfecting of our humanity to God. Paul says. “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (Romans 8:29 NASB). The plan from eternity past was for us to look like Jesus as He expressed God's *character* in His *humanity*, not in God's *attributes* in His “*professional*” capacity as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. While Paul begins with, “Therefore be imitators of God” he continues, “as beloved children and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1 NASB). If we are going to be overimitators of anyone, why not of Jesus?

For the Father's part, it is noteworthy that at the baptism of the thirty-something Jesus, His expressed words do not begin with a pronouncement on the professional status of Jesus, but their relationship, “And a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!” (Matthew 3:17). This focus on love both here and earlier “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does” (John 5:20) indicates

that an important part of the image we are created in is *relational*. We are to be like Jesus in His childlike dependence on the love of His Father. It is a point emphasised by the church fathers who presented "... human salvation as the beginning of a new mode of our own natural existence, and a new relationship with the triune God modelled on that of God the Son."²⁹⁷

Kathryn Tanner says, "Human beings are made for fellowship with God by being made for fellowship with one another. This essential sociability makes them the image of God in the usual way. The reference to male and female in Genesis 1:27, considered alongside the Adam and Eve story, suggests that human beings are the image of God by being social beings, through their need for human companionship, by their not being made to be alone. The trinity enters the picture rather late at this point to show, once again, that something about human nature considered in itself images God. The essentially social character of human persons is an analogue for the essentially relational character of persons within the trinity."²⁹⁸

As *Homo sapiens* we may well want to differentiate ourselves from other animals by the attribute of high intelligence as if it is this that makes us closer to God. But, as we saw, our neotenus evolution reflects both a humbling reality and, as we see with the benefit of revelation, a sublime calling. The evolution of our childlikeness is as much a hallmark of our species as our intelligence and this childlikeness converges with God's plan from eternity past. Shakespeare did not get it quite right with "All the world's a stage." It is *we* who are, in preparation for eternity. God's purpose was to create us in the childlike and personal image of His Son so that we could know Him as our Heavenly Father. A very momentous thing was going through the evolution of protracted attachment between mother and child. As psychiatrist Jeremy Holmes avers, "Attachment is a unifying principle that reaches from the biological depths of our being to its furthest spiritual reaches."²⁹⁹

For our and our children's emotional and spiritual well-being what is of utmost importance is that we are attached, both to our earthly parents and to our Heavenly Parent. Knowing how this attachment works psychologically or how it arose evolutionarily is secondary. Recall that in the case of Alice Miller, for instance, it is possible to know a great deal about the psychology of attachment without actually being attached to one's children.

This is something that certain adults do not get. For instance, the biologist J.B.S. Haldane once tried to make a joke at Christ's expense by remarking that He should be regarded as the prophet of paedomorphosis (evolution of childlikeness in adults) for saying, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).³⁰⁰ Haldane is implicitly congratulating himself for knowing something that presumably even Jesus didn't. Not unlike the Pharisees, Haldane was too fixated on his professional stature to see the Person of Jesus. He was the scientific counterpart to the religious Pharisees.

Sadly, the joke is on Haldane, for he fulfilled Christ's prophecy. Between the loincloth and the nappy, the esteemed biologist would only see the former. Jesus was indeed not the prophet of paedomorphosis, not because it didn't happen, but because He was preoccupied with showing His Father's love rather than foretelling God's omniscience. His mission was not to get us to know about but to get us to know Him.

Consider the occasion when Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father. Jesus replied, “Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, emphasis mine). If we baulk at this, is it not because we keep thinking of God as the Heavenly Professional. Art Linkletter mentions a boy who did not have this problem, understanding the significance of the first Christmas, “I've never forgotten the boy who told me his favorite Bible story: “It's the one about Jesus being born.”

“Why do you like that one?”

“Because I feel sorry for boys and girls who have no parents, and when Jesus was born, He became the Father of everyone who has no mother or dad.”³⁰¹

**“Don't you know me, Philip, even after I
have been among you such a long time?
Anyone who has seen me has seen the
Father”**

(Jesus of Nazareth, John 14:9)

Jesus was not talking *about* God at all, but *showing* Him to them through His person. He was not talking about God's attributes in theological categories, but giving Himself, giving His personal nature as God to them. This is what is so very important about the Incarnation to the Father. Through Christ we connect to our Heavenly Father and open our fractured souls to restoration.

We do not have the theological competence, however well trained we are, to see God in His omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. We cannot reach up to Him. He has to reach down to us. This is something acclaimed theologians freely admit. For instance Karl Barth, who is slightly less far removed from omniscience than most of us, averred, “We may believe that God can and must only be absolute in contrast to all that is relative, exalted in contrast to all that is lowly, active in contrast to all suffering, inviolable in contrast to all temptation, transcendent in contrast to all immanence, and therefore divine in contrast to everything human. . . . But such beliefs

are shown to be quite untenable, and corrupt and pagan, by the fact that God does in fact be and do this in Jesus Christ... . By doing this God ... shows Himself to be more great and rich and sovereign than we had imagined. . . . He is absolute, infinite, exalted, active, impassible, transcendent, but ... He is all this as the Lord, and in such a way that He embraces the opposites of these concepts even while He is superior to them... . His particular ... presence ... in the man Jesus ... is itself the demonstration and exercise of His ... perfection... . His omnipotence is that of a divine plenitude of power in the fact that (as opposed to any abstract omnipotence) it can assume the form of weakness and impotence and do so as omnipotence, triumphing in this form.”³⁰²

Barth is using theological language to make the simple point that if you want to see God, look at Jesus. Both abnormal childhoods and adulterated inclinations towards seeing significance only in terms of power, including intellectual power can actually keep us from seeing God Incarnate for who He is and subsequently affect our view of the Father. This may happen even while we are reading the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels.

A storm inside the boat?

Consider an incident so familiar that we easily overlook how it went down for the disciples. To foster a fresh look, I'm going to change the particulars. Imagine Jesus goes out in a sedan with His close friends for a night on the town. Jesus, anticipating a long evening, is in the back seat fast asleep. The car gets stuck on a railway track just as a freight train is barreling towards them. Peter keeps trying to start the car. No luck. Finally he blurts out, “Wake up Master! Don't you care that we get smashed to smithereens?”

Jesus awakes, holds up his hand and says quietly, “Halt.” The train stops without even so much as a screech. They become scared to death saying to each other, “Who is this that can stop a freight train in its tracks? He made it look like a toy!”

This is how it went down in Mark's Gospel (see accompanying painting, *Jesus with his disciples on the Sea of Galilee* (1967) by Ernst Georg Bartsch.³⁰³ The incident is titled, “Jesus calms the storm” in the NIV. Look closely at what happened and we will see that the heading, which is not in the original manuscripts, misses the mark.



“That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4: 35-41).

I'm sure the hearts of the disciples missed a beat. There is something darkly funny about this. In dealing with the storm, Jesus gave them something to be far more worried about, namely Himself. Philip Yancey notes that the calming of the storm did not foster intimacy between Jesus and his disciples; rather it terrified them.³⁰⁴ A storm *inside* the boat would be the real trouble. A furious storm would be nothing compared to an infuriated Jesus. If, as we saw, the beat of a butterfly wing could lead to a hurricane, what could the heartbeat of Jesus do? They had better hope that His heart strings bent towards them and there is not the slightest adulteration in His psyche!

It might have crossed one of their minds to hop overboard and take their chances in the Sea of Galilee. At least it wasn't personal for the storm! After all, they were bothering him while he was trying to sleep and hinting that He didn't really care for them. The terrified reaction of the disciples reflects the human condition. Ticking off a supreme power is our deepest dread. As with Adam's response to God, so with all of us, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Genesis 3:10).

If the Son of Man can deal so effectively with a powerful storm how can we trust the Father with something so delicate as our fractured souls? And so we have our angst over the true nature of God. If we are ever going to trust the Father as children it is, as Trevor Hudson points out, crucial that we do not have a false picture of Him. Recall, for instance, that with Norbert Wiener's intensely exacting father he could not abide the existence of a personal God. Pastor Trevor Hudson relates that Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, was raised by a severe mother. “Constantly she would say to him: “If I see you, my son, stealing an apple from my pantry, I’ll punish you.” Then she would add quickly, “If you take an apple and I don't see you, Almighty God will see you, and he will punish you.” It doesn’t take much imagination to catch a glimpse of the harsh picture of God these words sketched in young Basil’s mind!”³⁰⁵

Hudson stresses that one's view of God is very consequential. “Those who view God as an impersonal force tend toward a cold and vague relationship with him. Those who see God as a heavenly tyrant, intent on hammering anyone who wanders outside his laws, seldom abandon themselves with joy to the purposes of his kingdom. Those who imagine God to be a scrupulous bookkeeper, determined to maintain up-to-date accounts of every personal sin and shortcoming, rarely acknowledge their inner contradictions and struggles in his presence.”³⁰⁶

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(Pastor Trevor Hudson)

God Incarnate puts the nature of God in sharp relief. Jesus is both very personal and very powerful and for the disciples on the Sea of Galilee He is inside the boat! But does Jesus tell them thunderously, “You're all fired?” No. Does He walk on the water back to shore in a huff leaving them in the boat to face the storm on their own? No. Does He toss the disciples overboard as punishment for their lack of faith? No. What He didn't do is as important as what He did, but we are not drawn to paying attention to non-acts of powerlessness. The disciples were at first terrified and then tranquil. They were first overtaken by His awesome power and then by his winsome person. The heading in the NIV should really be, “Jesus calms the disciples.” We know this from what they didn't do. They didn't flee to Syria, Egypt or beyond. Then the Gospels would have played out very differently! Instead, the disciples stayed close by him.

Those of us with fractured souls deeply need to see the perfect personhood of Jesus in His compassionate use of power along with his readiness to be powerless. Evolution can take us only so far. We need the only unevolved human as our model for the ideal person and the Holy Spirit as the Father's means to move us in his Son's direction, restoring us from the ravages of the butterfly effect. If Jesus can deal so very effectively with a storm *and the disciples*, he can deal with the butterfly effect in our own lives and with those butterflies in our stomachs in facing the Father. This is so, not just or even primarily because He is so very powerful, but because He is so very gentle.

In depending on the Holy Spirit and trusting in the love of the Father, as Jesus did, we become more like Jesus which fosters our seeing Him better and trusting Him more. In doing so we become more like His loving self. This dynamic is so crucial because my paraphrase of Ashley Montagu is so true, “The *only* way to be loving is by being loved.” You don't have to be an anthropologist or psychologist to know the importance of being loved. Its importance was known long before these professions first emerged. The Apostle John said, “We love because he [Christ] first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Theologian Kathryn Tanner says simply, “The greater one’s dependence upon God, the more one receives for one’s own good.”³⁰⁷ There is a positive feedback loop that counteracts the destructiveness of the butterfly effect. The Apostle Paul, in effect, says as much, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Forget about trying to soar like a butterfly in our own strength. The secret to spiritual growth is to be like a caterpillar munching on spiritual food and leaving our transformation to the Holy Spirit. In time we will fly like angels, but first must come good spiritual nutrition. It cannot be for nothing that Jesus used feeding metaphors, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35) and “Take and eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). Let us hear it from a child. After having much fun with toy glow-in-the-dark bugs, five-year-old Christopher said to his grandmother who had given them to him, “Grandma, this is like Jesus; if we stay close to Him, we will glow in the dark! Right?”³⁰⁸ As Basil Hume came to know Jesus better, he came to realise concerning apples as he later testified, “... God might have said to him, “My son, why don't you take two?””³⁰⁹

Can we trust the Father of the Son of Man with our souls? Yes, because if you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father. Archbishop Michael Ramsay said it so well, “God is Christlike and in him there is no un-Christlikeness at all.”³¹⁰ The deep purpose of the great reverse metamorphosis is to show us that God does un-great just as He does great. He does powerless just as He does power. Whatever our dysfunction, He is the Father who is as exquisitely sensitive as His Son and who will never abandon or forsake His children.

“God is Christlike and in him there is no un-Christlikeness at all.”

(Archbishop Michael Ramsay)

It is crucial to have an authentic view of our Heavenly Father as the model for how we parent our children. When our eldest daughter, Rachel, was about six years old I

had told her to help clear away the dishes to which she asked, “Are you the boss around here?”

Taking care to wink at my wife, I replied with some satisfaction, “As a matter of fact I am.”

“No you're not,” she retorted, “Jesus is.”

She left me speechless. I'm glad she did. Having powerful, flawed parents that answer only to themselves ravages children, as we have seen. The father who remains a child towards his Christlike Heavenly Father is serving the best interests of his own children and others.

The religious leaders that Jesus faced had enormous difficulty seeing the Father and the Son for who they were. They couldn't understand how Jesus could welcome sinners and eat with them. Jesus tells them the so-called story of the wayward son to draw their attention to our Loving Father (Luke 15:11–32). In the well-known story the father rushes to embrace and accept his returning profligate son. But Jesus had already done even better than tell them that story. He had shown them the Loving Father by fraternising with sinners yet they could not really see Him.

Since the Father is the Almighty, Jesus might have told the story in terms of the Considerate Boss and the lazy employee. It is not expressed in these terms, but in effect, Jesus is rounding up disciples and the rest of us as employees in the business of fulfilling the great commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself. The problem with this metaphor, as we have seen, is that professionalism can all too easily go to our adult heads in unsavoury ways. How do we go about loving one's neighbour personally like a child and professionally like an adult? Jesus tells the familiar though often misinterpreted story of the Good Samaritan that is very helpful in this regard. We miss the meaning, as we will see, by having a biased approach to the parable.

Loving our neighbour professionally and personally

An expert on the law comes up to Jesus to test him which is so funny really, a creature setting out to test the Creator! He asks, “What must I do to receive eternal life?” The Creator responds by setting up the creature.

Jesus asks, “What does the law say?”

The lawyer answers, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.””

“Correct,” says Jesus, “Do this and you will live.”

Then the lawyer asks, “Who is my neighbour?”

Jesus responds with that well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (see accompanying painting by Domenico Fetti in circa 1620). Theologian N.T. Wright, with initials befitting a New Testament scholar says, “Jesus' reply, one of the most brilliant miniature stories ever composed, has often been misunderstood by moralizing, existentializing, or hasty exegesis.”³¹¹ As we will see, Jesus makes sure that the very last thing we can do with the Great Commandment is use it as a checkbox to see if we are doing alright relative to someone else.



In the story a man goes down to Jericho from Jerusalem. This, as Wright points out, is the direct and dangerous route through the West Bank, especially if you are alone.

The indirect and safer route that most took, including Jesus, was through the Jordan valley.³¹² The man took the road less travelled and that made all the difference. He was as naive with routes as Norbert Wiener was with blizzards. Being inappropriately childlike as an adult is far from an asset (see Ephesians 4:14, Hebrews 5:12-14). He is attacked, robbed and left half-dead. A priest and a Levite come past the victim and do nothing. The priest and Levite were very looked up to at the time. They were considered the heroes. What Jesus is doing is building up the suspense to a climax, to the ultimate hero of the story. Then comes the shock. He is, wait for it ... an enemy.

If Jesus had not told the parable the lawyer could easily have gone away with a narrow interpretation of the commandment, saying to himself, “The nasty fellow living a block away isn't strictly my neighbour so I needn't bother with him. It is striking that Jesus names the professions of the priest and Levite, but not that of the victim or the Samaritan. There is a hint here, perhaps, that professionalism can get in the way of just being human to another human. The parable makes it harder for the questioner to say to himself, “I am an expert in the law, it isn't my job to bother with a robbery victim” or to claim that there is something about the victim that makes him less deserving of help. For all we know he could have been a beggar. Lazarus was a beggar that was welcomed into heaven. How easily we can misinterpret Scripture to suit ourselves! By choosing the characters for his parable from cultures that were enemies of each other, Jesus is very clearly revealing that He wants us to interpret loving one's neighbour expansively not narrowly. He wants us to be so expansive as to include one's enemies. Wright points out that it is even more radical than that. If this was a moralising story about loving the unlovable, Jesus would have made the neighbour a Samaritan, but he is a Jew. Jesus is telling us that loving one's neighbour as God wants takes forms that are least expected. He wants us to be lateral, go big, not bigoted.

It is, as we have seen, the common predilection of adults to get narrow and prescriptive, letting their professions circumscribe their identity, whereas children go lateral. We are human first and then professionals. We should love our neighbours because we are all human. Why does Jesus make obeying the great commandment so demanding? It is to address why the lawyer is asking the question in the first place. We are told why. It was in order to justify himself (v 29). Notice the self-focus indicative of bigotry.

The teacher was looking for a nice, easy, practical way to justify himself before God and others so that he looks good. Jesus was making it most impractical for him to do so. If we cannot even love our neighbour as ourselves, how are we ever going to love our enemies as ourselves? Jesus was making it impossible for the teacher to justify himself before God. The statement “Do this and you will live” as theologian Kenneth E. Bailey points out, “is not a general admonition to good works but rather an answer to the lawyer's question about self-justification ... What can I do to inherit eternal life? What can I do to justify myself? The only conclusion he can come to is, “These things

are beyond me. Clearly I cannot justify myself, but all things are possible with God” (cf. Luke 18:27).”³¹³ The great commandment and the law in general were not meant to lead us to justify ourselves but to the Saviour who does the justifying. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24-25 The Message).

The expert in the law was no doubt chuffed with himself over how much he knew about the law. The trouble was that he didn't know God, at least not as Jesus knew his Father. We cannot separate the second part of the Great Commandment from the first. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.” The love relationship we have with God deeply affects how we love others. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The only practical way to love one's neighbour is to let God do the loving through us. The law takes us to our loving Heavenly Father and He does the loving using us as his instruments. It comes back to the importance of what Jesus said as mentioned earlier, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). *We go to our Heavenly Father as children to be loved and He loves us and loves others through us.* It is in childlike dependence on our Heavenly Father that we, collectively with our diverse giftings, will love our neighbour in all the creativity we would expect from our Creator God. Justifying ourselves through the law makes love a narrow duty. Depending on God as his child enables our love to go large and lateral.

**We go to our Heavenly Father as
children to be loved and He loves us
and loves others through us.**

The not-so-good Samaritan

Imagine that someone, who happens to be an innkeeper by way of profession, overhears Jesus. He says to himself, “If you listen closely to what Jesus said, you will notice that there are actually two Samaritans. On the first day the Good Samaritan cares for the victim directly, up close and personal. Thereafter he becomes the not-so-good Samaritan by leaving the victim in the care of the innkeeper, only caring for the victim indirectly by paying for his care. He adds to himself that the parable would be better called, “The Parable of the Good Innkeeper.” He goes away chuffed with himself that he knows better than Jesus who is the good guy. Let's call him the Chuffed Innkeeper.

He knows what Jesus said, but completely misses the purpose of the parable. Jesus' purpose is to enlarge our view of loving our neighbour, not restrict it. It is entirely possible to hear the parable and carry on seeking to justify oneself. Such is the nature of bigotry. Loving your neighbour up close and personal is essential when your neighbour is your own child. Making it essential for loving others in general is both narrowly prescriptive and immature.

The Good Samaritan and the innkeeper in the parable are not in competition, but in cooperation. The Good Samaritan in a professional, adult manner was single-minded in loving the victim. He also went lateral in giving the job to the innkeeper in the story who may very well be in a better position to care for the victim. We need others to best love our neighbour. The Good Samaritan did not stick around in order to be seen to be the Good Samaritan because his preoccupation was with the well-being of his victim not his self-image.

The Signwriter Samaritan

Imagine that someone else had overheard Jesus speaking to the lawyer. He happens to be a Signwriter. He gets an idea. What if he addresses the problem of naivete in travellers? He prints a sign indicating the alternative, indirect, safer route to Jericho through the Jordan valley. To be extra persuasive he adds the slogan, "This is the way that Jesus goes." In terms of how to love one's neighbour, there is the direct, down-road way of the good Samaritan and then there is the up-road way of the Signwriter Samaritan. Which one is more loving would you say?

Neither. The one is not less or more loving than the other, just differently loving. By a wooden interpretation of Christian love, the Signwriter Samaritan is not as loving as the good Samaritan. Since the Signwriter Samaritan's expression of love is indirect, it doesn't work so well for a parable. However, Jesus is not using the parable to *define* what love looks like, but to *illustrate* it. Bigots want to define loving one's neighbour relative to their particular profession, whether lawyers, innkeepers or whatever else. It develops their brand. The Signwriter went more lateral in loving his neighbour, but not less loving.

Notice that the Signwriter Samaritan, with his up-road approach of dealing with the deeper cause of systemic problems, is less visible like the caterpillar whereas the Good Samaritan, with his up-road approach of dealing with immediate fixes is more visible like the butterfly.

As it so happens, the Chuffed Innkeeper bumps into the Signwriter Samaritan as he is putting up his sign. Since he is illiterate he asks the Signwriter what it says. The Signwriter obliges. "Pfff," he says, "Don't be so proud of yourself that you can read and write. You obviously haven't heard the story about the Good Innkeeper as told by the selfsame Jesus you mention on your stupid sign. The way to love your neighbour

is directly, up close and personal.” Professional rivalry has raised its head. The Chuffed Innkeeper is hardly being loving and he can’t be because he is not secure in the Heavenly Father’s love and so he is trying by professional means to earn His love. The Chuffed Innkeeper is now the Miffed Innkeeper because someone has dared to try to fulfil the Great Commandment differently so as to raise questions about the way he would do it. Bigotry is a treadmill. Self-justification is a recipe for hell not life. There is a place for both vocations in His kingdom, but they need to be content within their place.

The Miffed Innkeeper is not content. He gets on a mission over his false perspective. Unlike the Apostle Paul, he has actually heard Jesus speak in person before his crucifixion. He gets on his hobby horse and visits Paul in prison. Based on his criterion that valid ministry must necessarily be in person he says, “Sorry to break this to you Paul, but your ministry is now over. Best leave it to others. Cheers.” I can't see the Apostle taking this lying down, but there are others that might easily lie down in defeat.

If Paul did resign we would not have his writings from prison and we would be missing much of the New Testament (see accompanying painting, *Saint Paul Writing His Epistles* (circa 1619) by Valentin de Boulogne). Paul would not have loved those that were yet to be born who couldn't thank him personally for it. Through his writing, the Apostle was something like the Signwriter Samaritan, warning people not about physical danger, but spiritual danger. He critiqued harmful notions that false teachers were spreading up close and personal with people. There is opportunity for ministry even from prison. The Apostle Paul wrote more books of the New Testament than any other apostle. Some later signwriter could point out that the Rock on which Christ built his church wrote a miserly 2% of the New Testament compared to the at least undisputed 25% of the Apostle Paul and 28% of Luke, but to discount the Apostle Peter or Luke on this basis is to be as inappropriately miffed as that Innkeeper. The two Apostles and Luke had *different*, not competing, roles.



It's worth taking in that many influential Christian thinkers throughout history, such as Augustine, Boethius, John of the Cross, Ignatius of Antioch, John Bunyan, Søren Kierkegaard, Watchman Nee, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and C.S. Lewis made lasting impacts through their writings without needing or being able to engage directly with their readers. Their up-road, devotedly crafted works have shaped lives across the centuries and continents.

The Samaritan outside the parable

So, there is the Good Samaritan and the Signwriter Samaritan, but there is yet another "Samaritan." Can you see who he is? You won't find him further up the road beyond the Signwriter Samaritan. You have to be even more childlike and lateral than that. You have to look outside the parable altogether. He is the Teacher Samaritan who is telling the parable. He is Jesus. Notice that Jesus outside the parable is even less visible than the Signwriter and even more like a caterpillar. Imagine the Miffed Innkeeper trying to argue that the Good Innkeeper is more loving than Jesus because he is up close and personal with the victim unlike Jesus' indirect teaching. Again, this is the sort of reasoning of someone who is trying to justify himself instead of celebrating the variety of ways God expresses his love.

Picking up on the expansiveness of God's call, Wright says, "What is at stake then and now, is the question of whether we will use the God-given revelation of love and grace as a way of boosting our own sense of isolated security and purity, or whether we will see it as a call and challenge to extend that love and grace to the whole world." No church, no Christian, can remain content with easy definitions which

allow us to watch most of the world lying half-dead in the road. Today's preachers, and today's defenders of the gospel, must find fresh ways of telling the story of God's love which will do for our day what this brilliant parable did for Jesus' first hearers"³¹⁴ Notice here that his view includes an indirect approach to loving others, that of telling them the story of God's love.

The heading, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan" is not in the Bible. To squabble amongst ourselves over who is the good guy is to miss the big picture. Jesus was alluding to the ushering in of His kingdom (see Mark 1:15) and God's love being poured out to and through both Jews and non-Jews with the distinction between them shattered (see John 3:16, John 4:22). As Wright points out, God's covenant extends, through Jesus, beyond Israel's borders to everyone.³¹⁵ Bailey asks pointedly, "Is not this a dramatic demonstration of the kind of love God offers through His unique agent in the Gospel?"³¹⁶ Where Bailey is going with this question is that the Samaritan outside the parable is the very same one who is inside the parable. You have to be even more childlike and lateral to see this though. Karl Barth says, "The good Samaritan ... is not far from the lawyer. The primitive exegesis of the text was fundamentally right. He stands before him incarnate, although hidden under the form of one whom the lawyer believed he should hate, as the Jews hated the Samaritans."³¹⁷ The parable may well be called "The Parable of the Good God."

"The good Samaritan ... is not far from the lawyer. The primitive exegesis of the text was fundamentally right. He stands before him incarnate, although hidden under the form of one whom the lawyer believed he should hate, as the Jews hated the Samaritans."

(Theologian Karl Barth)

The early church could see something in the parable that many today in their sophistication cannot. I should say *Someone*. Bailey continues, "The exegesis of the early centuries consistently identified the Good Samaritan with Jesus himself. Indeed, in John 8:48, the Jews throw a taunt at him with the words, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" But of far greater consequence is the costly demonstration of unexpected love that we see in the actions of the Samaritan. He appears suddenly and unexpectedly from the outside and acts to save. The traditional leaders of the community fail, yet God's agent arrives to "bind up the wounds" of the sufferer."³¹⁸

Lots of Samaritans

To generalise, God loves our neighbour through us, His children, collectively. We need Him and others and it includes direct and indirect approaches. To this end we need to value each person whether or not they have a profession and within and without their profession from innkeepers to signwriters, from children to mothers, from carpenters (Jesus was one) to writers (Jesus wasn't one), from psychologists to philosophers, from biologists to theologians and we need to do so for the sake of loving our neighbour. No one person and no one profession has a God's eye view of everything and can love everyone completely. Theologian J. Wentzel van Huyssteen says emphatically, "In fact, "no one disciplinary voice, and no one set of judgments, practices, or principles, will be able to claim absolute priority over, or be foundational for, any other."³¹⁹

Imagine a doctor coming across a woman bitten by a cobra. He is very religious and wanting to scrupulously obey the story of the Good Samaritan, he takes the woman to a motel to care for her. For all his qualifications and good intentions, this is not good enough and not loving his neighbour. The doctor is a variation of Dr. Sally Smith. The victim needs the care of special professionals at a hospital. Doctors need other kinds of doctors to fulfil the Great Commandment.

Snakes kill about 100,000 people per year globally.³²⁰ There is something that kills eight times as many - not people generally - but babies per year? That's right, more than 800,000 babies per year globally.³²¹ Do you know what it is? Milk formula. Humans make a great fuss about fatalities from venomous snakes, but as discussed in my *The Titanic, the Titan and the Teat*,³²² are very largely oblivious or impervious to babies dying from milk formula. Since milk formula executives do not throw babies into the air and shoot them as the Nazis did, their evil does not precipitate the same outrage on the average human. You might be tempted to call these executives snakes in suits, but that is being unkind to snakes. How, then, do we love the babies given milk formula? Not so easy, is it? One important way to love them is to get the facts straight about the threats to them. For that we need those professionals called epidemiologists. I mentioned this to someone with a medical background and it clearly pressed her maternal buttons. She was emphatic that milk formula executives should be shot. How loving is her disposition towards her neighbour? Well, it is rather loving towards babies!

One moral option is for suitable professionals to look up-road and put up signs critiquing the cultural systems that produce the likes of milk formula executives. Surprise, surprise, medical epidemiologist Gabor Maté links unmet emotional needs in childhood to an impersonal adulthood of external validation through wealth acquisition or professional status. He calls the result what it is - addiction, saying, "Addiction cuts large swaths across our culture. Many of us are burdened with compulsive behaviours that harm us and others, behaviours whose toxicity we fail to

acknowledge or feel powerless to stop. Many people are addicted to accumulating wealth; for others the compulsive pull is power.”³²³

The milk formula tragedy is greatly compounded by professionals who are not humble enough to know where their profession ends and another's such as an epidemiologist begins.³²⁴ Examples, documented in *The Titanic, the Titan and the Teat*, are a professor of political science, a spy novelist, and a business writer coming to the defence of milk formula! An epistemologist could have told them how ridiculous they look. As I said earlier, babies need philosophers after all. Here we have Bad Signwriters with their signs declaring that milk formula is great and breast is not so great. Another option in loving babies is for suitable professionals to put up-road signs declaring the opposite. The distinction between up-road and down-road endeavours and the appropriate place of each was grasped by epidemiologist and medical sociologist John B. McKinlay, for instance, although he did not use these exact terms.³²⁵ We owe a debt of gratitude to big-picture professionals such as him.

We need those signwriters called philosophers, preferably who are also mothers, to counteract ideas that are dangerous to the personal development of babies. Philosopher and mother Mary Midgley, looking up-road, noticed that there are “wider metaphysical notions that had first produced” the anti-affectionate approach of the likes of John B. Watson³²⁶ and comments in her book *The Myths We Live By*, “It is interesting to notice that what made this approach seem scientific was certainly not that it rested on research showing the success of these child-rearing methods. (If there had been any such research, it would have produced the opposite result.) Instead, the behaviourists’ attitude seems surely to have been itself an emotional one, a fear of affectionate behaviour as something dangerously human, something beneath the dignity of scientists.”³²⁷

Loving our close little “neighbours”

What about parents loving those little “neighbours” they call their very own children? It is striking that Jesus says, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:11). As in the Old Testament, (see Psalm 103:13) the kindness of a human parent is presumed and the kindness of God argued for on that basis. The former evolved before the latter was revealed in Scripture. Indeed, it was presumed that *unbelievers* loved their children. The Apostle Paul says, “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8).

It seems that increasingly the need is to hear the reverse. We need to love our children as the Father loves His Son. That model is implicit in the New Testament. For instance, the Father sends an angel to instruct Joseph in a dream to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod (Matthew 2:13). Not a moment too soon, the

clergyman Thomas Fuller felt it necessary to teach that “Charity [meaning Christian love] begins at home, but should not end there.”³²⁸ In his time a child would be born that would come to sweep the West with his philosophical acumen and emotional disregard for children, namely Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

How are parent’s own children to be loved professionally and personally? To love children effectively in today's world takes all kinds of professionals such as teachers, coaches and medics. Where do parent’s personal roles end and where do the roles of professionals begin? There are many dimensions to a child, such as emotional, physical, physiological, intellectual and spiritual. Some of these are far better left to a professional. Professionals such as medics are, or should be, single-minded over knowing *about their field*. A child is only one of many patients that a doctor will see in a day. It is decidedly impractical and indeed dangerous for the child that a professional takes a *personal* regard for the child. Parents can leave *knowing about* children to the professionals, being single-minded in *knowing* their own children is up to them. It is risky for a parent to be professional towards their children, as we saw with Boris Sidis and Leo Wiener since their personal role as parents can so easily be sidelined. Personal loving is first and foremost for the parents and grandparents and then the wider family. “It takes a village to raise a child” goes the African proverb with the proviso that each must do so within their capacity and place. To be personally loved, children do not need professional parents, but personal ones. It is here that getting up close is so crucial. Children don't care how much parents know so much as wanting to know how much they care, to paraphrase pastor and writer John C. Maxwell.³²⁹ Being illiterate does not necessarily make one a bad parent. Illiteracy can put parents at an advantage in some ways since they won't be reading the likes of John B. Watson or Bertrand Russell. They would be much better off going with their genomic wisdom.

Extreme reverse metamorphosis

As great as Christ's love was in teaching the story of the Good Samaritan to people, it was not his greatest act of love. We need to go much further up-road to see that. There *is* a place to get wooden in our interpretation of love and that is where Jesus defines it. To demonstrate his love, Jesus went even more than lateral, even more than ultimately up-road, he went vertical and died for us on the cross (see accompanying painting, *Christ on the Cross* (1846) by Eugène Delacroix). How creative and expansive is the love of Jesus for His neighbour! Here is the place to get single-minded in taking in the Father’s extraordinary love for us, not go lateral in considering how He could have done better. We might expect Jesus to have done something consummately professional to redeem us, but instead He does nothing at all. Jesus died not by something He did, but by what others did to Him, through their acting in their professional capacity as political and religious leaders in putting Him to death. This should make us think again about getting on our professional high horse and trying to justify ourselves before God.



Our Heavenly Father is most single-minded in his love, “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16a). His Son went even more lateral than reverse metamorphosis in His love for us. He took reverse metamorphosis to the extreme. He went much lower than wearing a nappy to identify with us to become even more powerless than an incontinent baby as He was raised on the cross. It would look to all the world a distinctly unprofessional move. He went all the way from omnipotence to death. The One who had the skin of a baby endured relentless flagellation and let the last smidgeon of power go out from Him. This does not mean that Jesus was not qualified for His redemptive mission. No, He was uniquely qualified like none other before or since. He did not need to wear a tie or any other accessories to sell his stature as Saviour however, because it was His personal identity as God Incarnate that qualified

Him. It was not *what* Jesus knew that was so crucial, but *who* he knew and who knew Him. He said as much, “I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. And I lay down My life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15).

In loving His neighbour Jesus went far further than fraternising with sinners. Hudson says, “The welcome home scene of the wayward son is not too good to be true. It is as real as broken flesh and a pierced side. ... The story that he lived convinces us that the story he told is true. We are the beloved sons and daughters of the Father. All is forgiven. We can come home.”³³⁰ In the words of six-year-old Justus when asked to say grace at dinner, “Dear God, thank You for giving us the baby Jesus, so He could die for us, and we could always have love in our hearts.”³³¹

The very best place to get our view of the Loving Father is when Jesus allowed Himself on the cross to become lower than a caterpillar. This is essentially the point he is making when he says on the eve of his execution, “Now the Son of Man is seen for who he is, and God seen for who he is in him” (John 13:31, *The Message*). The calming of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee was a prelude. If Jesus had cause to be furious, humanly speaking, it is certainly at those who put him on the cross. Jesus did not just preach “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43), He also lived and died it. It would be understandable if He did not give the perspective of his torturers the light of day and said, “By God, you will pay for this.” Instead, He says, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). That we continued to put Jesus to death after He said this, could there be a clearer demonstration that bigotry is our human condition? And what is His Father's stance towards those torturers? Since if you have seen Jesus you have seen the Father, His Father's stance is exactly the same. It is, if I may be excused for putting words in His mouth, “Son, forgive them for they know not what they do.” We did our worst against the Father in going after his beloved Son. Instead of going after us in vengeance, He used our very machinations to go after us in redemptive love. How unbigoted is the Father's condition! It is outrageously inappropriate that the term 'bigot' is derived from 'by God.' Alas, professing Christians are not excluded from bigotry.

**“Father, forgive them for they know
not what they do.”**

(Jesus of Nazareth, Luke 23:34)

The Father could have at once put more than twelve legions of angels at His Son's disposal (see Matthew 26:53). He could have tossed the entire human race off the face of the earth. If what He didn't do that day does not strike us enough, it is because we are too smitten by His power rather than His person, His ability rather than His personality. Darkness did come over the land, there was an earthquake and tombs broke open (Matthew 26:45,51), but towards the torturers the Father acted as powerlessly as His dying Son. This demonstrates that His powerlessness is not an *attribute*, but a *choice* governed by his love. Should this not calm us down completely and draw us to the Father?

Philosopher Dallas Willard centres in on the crucial significance of Calvary. He does not use the terms 'ultimately up-road,' but that is where he is going, "When Jesus hung on the cross and prayed, "Father, forgive them because they do not understand what they are doing," that was not hard for him. What would have been hard for him would have been to curse his enemies and spew forth vileness and evil upon everyone, God and the world, as those crucified with him did, at least for a while. He calls us to him to impart himself to us. He does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him."³³² It is through Him that we love as the Good Samaritan did.

It is vital for the sake of our children that we are drawn to our loving Heavenly Father as opposed to some cold religious system. John B. Watson's mother was extremely religious along with being emotionally detached. This must have had an impact on her son. We have seen the resultant impact on his children and others in posterity. Bertrand Russell was raised by grandparents that were similarly religious and emotionally detached with sad impacts on his own children as biographer Ray Monk recounts.³³³ Being attached, instead, to our loving Heavenly Father will surely foster affection as a natural expression of His love.

Willard could also have said 'supernatural expression' since it is through the Holy Spirit that we become like Christ. What Michael Ramsay said of God the Father is also true of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christlike and in Him there is no un-Christlikeness at all. We are actually better off than the disciples. They had the calming Person of Jesus *with* them. We have the calming Person of the Holy Spirit *in* us. The Holy Spirit assures us that God Almighty is our loving Heavenly Father. "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:6). Similarly we are told, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15-16). Being children of the Son's Father does not only express our relationship, eternally, with God. It also expresses our development under His care as our perfectly empathetic Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. We are not alone in our trauma. God Incarnate experienced trauma

Himself and the Father experienced the trauma of losing His only begotten Son. It is for this reason that theologian William Barclay was able to write in his autobiography, “The day my daughter was lost at sea there was sorrow in the heart of God.”³³⁴

Alas, Charles Darwin, this terrific father who lost his beloved Annie to become so beset with grief, grew up in an environment that denied that if you have seen the Son you have seen the Father.³³⁵ It was Unitarian. For all his genius in natural history, Darwin did not have the theological expertise to counter the clever arguments of the Unitarians. There is another approach, a decidedly nonprofessional one. That approach was there at an authentic deathbed conversation between a son and his father that happened to be Emma Darwin's grandfather, Sir James Mackintosh.

Sir James was an accomplished professional in his own right, but neither this nor theology came up, at least not to the fore. The renowned abolitionist was, understandably, “beyond caring about current affairs.” Instead they spoke about someone who had made a deep impression on them. As Robert, son of Sir James recounts it, “I said to him at one time, “Jesus Christ loves you”; he answered slowly, and pausing between each word, “Jesus Christ—love—the same thing.” He uttered these last words with a most sweet smile. After a long silence he said, “I believe—.” We said, in a voice of inquiry,—“In God?” He answered,—“In Jesus.””³³⁶

Since it is not by his own power that Sir James will be raised to eternal life, it is perhaps appropriate that just before he went to be with his Father in Heaven, Sir James was temporarily about as professional as a newborn. When that stage called death approaches, our failing faculties can serve a great purpose. It can remind us that our value in our Heavenly Father's eyes does not depend on our performance. It can remind us that the next stage is eternity. It can remind us that even God Incarnate experienced transience and that even He needed others to fulfil the Great Commandment.

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